

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS & PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 AUGUST 2007 AT 10:00AM IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

- (1) Mr Basil McCrea (Chair)
- Ms Mary McKee (Vice Chair)
- Mr Alex Maskey
- Mrs Rosaleen Moore
- Mr Gearóid Ó hEára
- (2) Professor Desmond Rea
- Mr Brian Rea
- (2) Mr David Rose
- Mr Suneil Sharma
- Mr Peter Weir

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Keir Starmer, QC
Ms Jane Gordon

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Sinead Simpson (Director of Policy)
5 Board Officials

- (1) Item numbers 3 and 5
- (2) Item number 5

1. APOLOGIES, ETC

Apologies were received from Ms Martina Anderson. NOTED.

2. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY & HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 JULY 2007

The Committee noted the minutes of the previous meeting on 18 July 2007.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING

3.1 Custody Visitors Statistics For January To March 2007 (Item 3.1 Of Minutes Refers)

The Service Monitoring Manager updated the Committee on the Custody Visitors statistics.

Members were advised that there has now been an administrative mechanism put in place to ensure the Board receives feedback when there are delays and the reasons for any delays. NOTED.

3.2 Injuries Caused By Attenuating Energy Projectile (AEPs) (Item 3.3 Of Minutes Refers)

The Committee was advised that a paper will be brought to a future Committee meeting regarding the previous Board's decision on AEPs. NOTED

3.3 Schedule Of Presentations 2007 (Item 5 Of Minutes Refers)

This item was dealt with under item 10.

3.4 Draft Revised Committee Role (Item 6 Of Minutes Refers)

The Director of Policy updated the Committee on the staffing situation.

Members were advised that the Deputy Principal (DP) post would be covered by another member of staff from within the Board, who would be temporarily promoted for the duration of the DP maternity leave. The Director of Policy post has also been filled through the 'Inter –change Programme'. The name of the official is being withheld until security clearance is finalised.

Arrangements will be made for 'Hand over periods'. NOTED.

3.5 First Day Briefing Paper (Item 7 Of Minutes Refers)

The Committee was advised that this matter has been actioned. NOTED.

3.6 Independent Assessment Panel Recommendations (Item 8 Of Minutes Refers)

This matter was dealt with under item 9.

3.7 Any Other Business

3.7.1 Strategic Review Of Parading (Item 12.2 Of Minutes Refers)

The Committee was advised that the Strategic Review of Parading Panel has agreed to meet with Committee Members and that a date would be notified in due course.

Following a decision on related, matters it was:-

AGREED:

That a report on a recent PSNI meeting with Bogside residents be requested from PSNI.

It was:-

AGREED:

That a Member would be presented with a copy of a paper which is to be presented to the Corporate Policy, Planning and Performance Committee on the use of the Irish language.

4. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

4.1 Launch Of Human Rights Annual Report On 25 September 2007

The Committee was advised of the date for the launch of the Human Rights Annual Report. NOTED.

4.2 Informal Engagement With Board's Human Rights Advisors

It was:-

AGREED:

That a letter would be sent to Members inviting them to an informal dinner with the Human Rights Advisors on the evening prior to the launch of the Human Rights Annual Report 2007.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman welcomed the Board's Human Rights Advisors, Mr Keir Starmer QC and Ms Jane Gordon to the meeting and invited them to present their Annual Report.

Mr Starmer began by acknowledging the work carried out by Ms Jane Gordon and also acknowledged the work undertaken by the Human Rights Assistant who would soon be leaving the Board.

Ms Gordon spoke briefly on the:-

- Monitoring Framework; and
- Monitoring Methodology.

She then presented a snapshot of the previous Annual Reports.

- 2007 – 44 Recommendations

- 2006 – 45 Recommendations – 6 outstanding and 9 implemented in part
- 2005 – 60 Recommendations – 7 outstanding and 5 implemented in part

Mr Starmer and Ms Gordon then talked Members through all 15 chapters of the Annual Report, pausing between chapters to give Members an opportunity to ask questions.

Some of the Members questions centred around:-

- Residual training issues;
- Policy Issues and why there remained problems;
- Operations;
- Code of Ethics;
- complaints and discipline;
- covert policing;
- victims rights;

The Chairman of the Board highlighted that, in relation to the covert policing chapter he had just received a letter from the Chief Constable, marked “Secret”, which highlighted the favourable comments made by the Office of the Surveillance Commissioners, in relation to their recent inspection of PSNI. A further briefing of the Chairman and Vice-chairman was being arranged.

Following discussion, it was:-

AGREED:

- in relation to Chapter 10, that Members be provided with:-
 - the job description of the Minority Liaison Officer (MLO)
 - the training brief for the cultural awareness training.

It was:-

RECOMMENDED:

That the Board should accept the recommendations contained within the of the Human Rights Annual Report 2007.

Although Members were happy to agree the recommendations, some Members needed more time to consider the scope of the recommendations and:-

It was:-

AGREED:

That Members should as soon as possible contact Board staff to advise of these issues and if these were significant officials would discuss with the Committee Chair and Vice Chair the need for a 'special' Committee meeting in advance of the September Boards consideration of the Human Rights Annual Report 2007.

6. INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS SCHEME (ICV) RECRUITMENT 2007

The Committee considered a paper which sought Members' agreement on the process for the recruitment of Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) in specific areas.

It was:

RESOLVED:

- To approve the proposed process for the recruitment of Independent Custody Visitors during 2007/08;
- To accept the nominations of the Human Rights and Professional Standards Committee that Gearóid ÓhEára and Mary McKee would sit on the interviewing panel.

7. POLICE OMBUDSMAN'S STATUTORY REPORT ON A REVIEW OF SECTION 61 (4) OF THE POLICE (NORTHERN IRELAND) ACT 1998

The Committee considered a paper which advised Members of the Police Ombudsman's Statutory Report which was completed on 25 May 2007.

A discussion took place around the 'self review' mechanism which it was acknowledged was laid down in legislation.

8. REGULATION 20 REPORTS

8.1 Report Into The Incident In Brooke Park, Londonderry – 6 April 2003

8.2 Report Into A Fatal Road Traffic Collision On The Springfield Road, Belfast On 4 June 2005

8.3 Report Into The Discharge Of Firearm At Glenshane Road, Londonderry On 24 February 2006

8.4 Report Into The Discharge Of Firearm At Mossvale Street, Belfast On 6 March 2006

The Committee noted the Regulation 20 reports and it was:-

AGREED:

That officials would write to PSNI seeking progress reports on the issues raised in the Ombudsman's Reports.

9. INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered a paper which asked Members to agree a process for implementing Regulation 16 of the Independent Assessment Panel. The paper was discussed and:

It was:-

AGREED:

That an expanded paper would be considered at the next meeting. In the interim, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee would meet with representatives of a range of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) following the launch of the Human Rights Annual Report on 25 September 2007.

10. INFORMATION PAPERS

10.1 Schedule Of Committee Presentations

10.2 Agenda For Meeting With Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

The Committee noted the Information Papers.

11. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

There were no matters arising.

12. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES

It was:-

AGREED:

That the development of a Communications Strategy would be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no matters arising.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Human Rights and Professional Standards Committee would be 12 September 2007 at 2:00pm in the Office of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

(Meeting closed 1:50pm).

Secretariat

August 2007

Chairman