

TAYSIDE JOINT POLICE BOARD

14 May 2001

Report by the Chief Constable No. PB 22/2001

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF MEETING FRAMEWORK

Abstract: This report apprises members of changes to the meeting framework which will promote a more proactive, focussed and consultative approach to meetings in the Force while at the same time considerably reduce the amount of time spent by senior staff at such meetings.

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 It is recommended that the Board note:

- (a) the contents of this report, and:
- (b) the positive steps taken to improve the arrangements for policy making, streamline the meeting structure and considerably reduce the time spent by senior staff at meetings.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 During the most recent inspection by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary there was a suggestion that arrangements for policy making should be reconsidered to produce sharper lines of authority and accountability. There was also a recognition that meeting structures and distribution of agenda, papers and minutes is an important ingredient of communication.
- 2.2 Since the inspection a considerable amount of effort has gone into improving communication within the Force. An important aspect of this work was to review the current meeting framework to establish what improvements could be made. Following on from observations made during the inspection it was clearly important to ensure the forum for making policy decisions was an integral part of the meeting framework and that consultation had taken place with Staff Associations prior to and during the policy making process.

3. THE REVIEW

- 3.1 The review looked not only at the meeting structure but also at the composition of the various working groups set up in the Force to ensure the remit of these working groups remained relevant and also that they dovetailed into the main meeting structure. At the same time work was ongoing to ensure the Service Review process under Best Value was being fully integrated in terms of ownership and reporting within the Force.

- 3.2 In addition to looking at the arrangements for policy making the objectives of the review were to look at streamlining the meeting structure and where possible to reduce the time spent at meetings by staff at all levels.
- 3.3 The review concluded that considerable enhancements could be made to the meeting framework which would meet the main objectives set. A copy of the new framework is attached as Appendix A to this report. Among the considerable benefits which will accrue from the new meeting structure are:
- improved strategic direction
 - a broader ownership of plans and the planning process
 - greater transparency at all levels
 - raised awareness in respect of operating environments with opportunities to assess potential impact of issues raised
 - increased consultation with Staff Associations
 - considerable reduction in time spent by staff at meetings
- 3.4 By bringing together Chief Officers, Divisional Commanders, Heads of Departments and representative groups of police and support staff in the various forums, planning and performance issues will be highlighted and staff will be more responsive to change in the Force's operating environment.
- 3.5 The months of January, April, July and October tend to have the highest abstraction levels due to annual leave and other commitments. With this in mind the meetings timetable has been structured to leave these months free of core meetings. In addition Mondays, Wednesdays and or Thursdays have also been left clear of meetings where possible. These initiatives are designed to reduce the time spent by officers at meetings and consequently augment operational efficiency.
- 3.6 Previously it has been estimated that senior officers spent a minimum period of 3,522 hours per year attending core meetings. As a consequence of the new structure it is estimated a saving of at least 1,700 police hours will be achieved on this figure. In addition there will be a considerable saving in administrative support required for the various meetings held on a regular basis.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report although the considerable time saved in attending meetings within the Force can be used to augment operational efficiency.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Treasurer and Clerk to the Board have been consulted in preparation of this report while the Staff Associations were consulted as part of the review process.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The review of the meeting framework recently carried out as addressed the suggestion raised in the most recent inspection by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary that the arrangements for policy making should be reconsidered to produce sharper lines of authority and accountability.
- 6.2 In addition the review has developed a streamlined meeting framework which will promote a more proactive, focussed and consultative approach to meetings in the Force while at the same time considerably reduce the amount of time spent by senior staff at such meetings.

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