

## **Scrutiny Committee December 13, 2011**

### Questions from members of the public

An e-mail was sent to the Police Authority inbox at 14:32 on December 12, 2011 from a member of the public for the Scrutiny Committee meeting on December 13.

In line with Standing Order 6 the member of the public was given three minutes to present his questions. The chairman provided answers to those asked during the meeting and written responses were to be provided to those that were not able to be asked during the meeting due to time constraints.

The written questions received are included below:

#### 1. Minutes

I note the police authority does not publish draft minutes (for committees, or the authority itself) in advance of a meeting at which the minutes are to be considered for approval. This introduces a delay in publication which makes it difficult to for members of the public follow what is going on, and is out of line with the practices at for example the County Council or Cambridge City Council. It makes it impossible for me, as someone who used the public speaking slot at the previous meeting, to see how my contribution has been minuted before the minutes are presented to the committee for formal approval.

#### **Police Authority response:**

Thank you for raising this issue, which has not been identified as an issue previously. We will review this to ensure responses to questions are posted on the web in a timely manner.

## 2. Restorative Justice Policies

At the last meeting of the scrutiny committee I asked for the publication of the force's policies on restorative justice disposals. I received assurances from the police representative at the meeting that all my requests would be fulfilled.

Have the committee, or the authority, yet received full written details of the force's policies on restorative justice disposals?

I note written details of the force's restorative justice disposal policies were not supplied to the last meeting of the scrutiny committee. I observed the committee agree at its last meeting to effectively pretend they had been supplied and to publish them along with the meeting papers. Is this still the intent?

Why is the publication of timely information on the police website taking so long? If the material has been drafted why is it not being provided to the committee?

### **Police Authority response:**

The Chair reported that the Police Authority believed that the above issues had been dealt with through the member of the public's meeting with a Constabulary representative and were unaware that the member of the public had found the approach of arranging a meeting with the Constabulary on this topic unhelpful.

The Chair also highlighted that the issue of Restorative Justice was on the current agenda. He noted that there has also been a section on the constabulary website for some time dedicated to restorative justice. This can be found under the 'victims and witnesses' section. During the Scrutiny Committee meeting the nature of the policy as guidance and the importance that professional judgement (with appropriate supervisory safeguards) was discussed and supported.

The Police Authority has now also made available on our website ([http://www.cambs-pa.gov.uk/user\\_files/article/RJSOPv1.1.pdf](http://www.cambs-pa.gov.uk/user_files/article/RJSOPv1.1.pdf)) the Restorative Justice Standard Operating Procedure which was distributed to all members just prior to the meeting for them to read outside the meeting. This document was not part of the pack of papers placed on the PA web site and distributed seven days before the meeting. This document was then referred to by the Deputy Chief Constable who read out the relevant section to ensure all those present had access to the relevant information.

The information on restorative justice on the Constabulary website was uploaded on November 25.

### 3. Phone Answering

Does the committee believe that the 999 system has been unaffected by the problems affecting the police's ability to answer its phones which started this summer?

Also on the subject of call answering performance; there is no data on how long those calls which don't meet the target call answering time take to answer. This is to me a key omission. I want to know for example, how many 999 calls take over a minute to answer, how many non-emergency calls take over five minutes to answer etc.

It would be useful if the performance pack quoted what the "grade of service" standards applicable actually are. Currently, as far as I can tell, an assumption has to be made that national standards are being followed.

#### **Police Authority response:**

The chair acknowledged he had answered a question at the council meeting on this topic and stated he stood by this reply. He drew members' attention to the data included in the Performance Pack (page 19) on the agenda which displayed the very limited impact there had been on 999 performance.

During the Scrutiny Committee meeting additional information was requested from the Constabulary regarding how long calls took to answer if they missed the appropriate grade of service. The Committee made clear their expectation that call handling must continue to improve and that progress would be closely monitored.

The definitions of grade of service were provided to the full Police Authority meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October – item 9 appendix.

#### 4. Monitoring of Authorisations under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

I would like to suggest the committee ought monitor the types of situation when RIPA authorisations are sought and authorised; so that there is oversight of when intrusive and directed police surveillance moves into new areas.

One specific question in this area I have is: "Is a RIPA authorisation obtained when a car number is entered into the ANPR system, enabling the tracking and monitoring of a vehicle (potentially in retrospect based on recorded information)?".

I note the Metropolitan Police Authority appear to have failed to keep up with, and adequately scrutinise, their forces' acquisition and use of technology for mass surveillance of, and interference with, mobile phones.

#### **Police Authority response:**

A report titled 'Covert Policing and Compliance with Human Rights' went to Scrutiny Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2011 (agenda item 8). That report highlighted the outcome of a formal inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners in January this year. The conclusion of this inspection was:

*"Cambridgeshire Constabulary continues to maintain high standards in its use and management of covert policing and the associated RIPA processes. The force clearly operates its covert activities in a structured and conscientious manner and the supporting documentation leaves little to be desired. The professionalism of the Covert Authorities Bureau and the commitment of all staff to ensure RIPA compliance are key to the success."*

RIPA applies to directed surveillance. On each and every occasion when an application for directed surveillance is made it incorporates ANPR if the assessment of need identifies this is appropriate. Retrospective use of ANPR for criminal investigation does not generally require the application of RIPA, but each case is treated on its merits. Records are maintained which are subject to inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners as set out above.

## 5. Public Question/Statement Slot Operation

I was disappointed with two aspects of the way my public questions were handled at the last meeting. I was offered a follow-up discussion with a police officer, and not an officer of the authority. Surely the reference to a follow up meeting with an officer in the authority's standing orders can't reasonably be interpreted to mean a police officer?

### **Police Authority response:**

You were given the opportunity to come back to the Authority if you were dissatisfied with any action or response to the points you raised. We were unaware until now that you were dissatisfied. If you would like to meet, with an officer of the Police Authority the executive office can facilitate your request. The terminology of the Standing Orders will be reviewed to remove any ambiguity between officers of the constabulary and of the police authority.

## 6. Stop and Search Recording

What steps have been taken to follow up the suggestion made by the committee at the previous meeting that the ethnicity groups recorded on the force's stop and search forms ought be reviewed, and further breakdown of the categories to provide statistics on the proportion of, for example white Eastern Europeans, being stopped and searched?

### **Police Authority response:**

The previous Scrutiny Committee was informed that a piece of research is being undertaken by the Cambridge University Institute of Criminology into how best information on the break down of the ethnicity groups subject to stop and search can best be recorded and presented. We are awaiting the results of this research to inform the next steps in assessing the effectiveness of the constabulary's equality policy.