

COMPLAINTS PANEL

ACTION

A meeting of the Complaints Panel was held on Wednesday 29 April 2009 in the Members Conference Room at Police Headquarters.

PRESENT: Mr Ted Cox JP (Chair), Cllr Mary Lanigan (Vice Chair), Cllr Caroline Barker, Mr Aslam Hanif and Mr Mike McGrory JP.

OFFICIALS: T/Supt Darren Best, DCC Bonnard and Mrs Jacqueline Chaffey (CC)
Mrs Jayne Harpe (CE)

ADDITIONAL MEMBERS: Cllr Victor Tumilty.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Dave McLuckie (ex officio), Mr Peter Race MBE (ex officio), Mrs Joanne Monkman, Cllr Paul Kirton and Cllr Ron Lowes.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grievance Procedure was being looked at in light of a recent Employment Tribunal result. A full report would be brought to a future Complaints Panel meeting.

CIVIL CLAIM STATISTICS

The Legal Advisor presented the Civil Claim Statistics for the period 1st April 2008 – 31st March 2009. The Panel was informed of the number and types of civil claims against the Force received during that period, the amount paid out for those claims finalised during the period and the amount recovered. The report also detailed a comparison between the Basic Command Units.

ORDERED that:

1. Members noted there had been a 3.03% increase in the number of claims received when compared with the same period last year. Public liability was the leading category.
2. There had been a 12.08% decrease in the number of claims finalised when compared with the same period last year.
3. 20% of finalised cases during the period were successfully defended which was to be compared with 13.18% successfully defended during the same period last year.
4. The 64 cases settled during the period cost the Force

£305,510. This was to be compared with the 79 cases settled during the same period last year at a cost of £308,483.

5. Middlesbrough remained the area with most claims.
6. The contents of the report be noted.

Whilst Legal Services had no control over the number of claims received, feedback was provided on a case by case basis to ensure assistance was given to Basic Command Units in managing risks.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST POLICE

The Head of Professional Standards Department presented the Complaints Against Police for the period 1st January 2009 to 31st March 2009. The Quarterly Progress Report on Complaint Issues for Cleveland Police for the period January to March 2009 was attached to the report.

There had been a 4% decrease in the number of cases recorded during that period (113 to 108), with a 6% increase in the number of complaints (up from 204 to 214).

Complaints of "other neglect/failure in duty" and "Incivility" continued to outnumber those of "Assault" allegations, 62 and 31 complaints respectively, compared to 26 in the "Assault" categories.

32.7% (35) of completed complaints had been locally resolved. During that period 60% (21) of locally resolved complaints had been by District and 40% (14) by the Professional Standards Department.

There was a discussion regarding the percentage of complaints by Ethnic Minority groups as opposed to the percentage of the population.

145 letters of appreciation had been received.

ORDERED that:

1. The contents of the report be noted.

DELIBERATE DAMAGE STATISTICS

The Head of Professional Standards Department informed Members of the cost to the Force of deliberate damage by way of forced entry into premises for the period 1st January 2009 to 31st March 2009 and of the operational results achieved through such forced entry and other premises searches.

Members were informed that the Force had paid out £13,028 in compensation for acts of deliberate damage, this compared to £7,987 paid out in the same period during the previous year. Whilst 3226 searches were conducted, only 283 (8.77%) resulted in deliberate damage compared to 7.6% in the previous year. The value of property, cash and drugs seized

totalled £720,429 and this compared to £783,689 seized during the same period in 2008.

ORDERED that:

1. The contents of the report be noted.
2. The operational benefits accruing to the Force in terms of property, drugs and cash seized, outweigh the cost of the damage claims be noted.
3. Report to be revised – a refined draft proposal for future meetings would be brought to the next meeting.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

ORDERED that pursuant to the local Government Act 1972, excluding the press and public from the meeting under Paragraphs 1 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CASES FROM THE COMPLAINTS REGISTER

Members of the Complaints Panel were shown the cases from the Complaints Register which had previously been selected by the Panel Chair.