

16 January 2012

Item 3

Employer Supported Policing

Purpose of report

For decision.

Summary

In 'Policing in the 21st Century' the Government set out a commitment to increase the number of special constables. It has therefore been encouraging Whitehall departments to implement the Employer Supported Policing scheme developed by the National Police Improvement Agency. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has recently written to the Chairman of the LGA requesting the LGA's assistance in promoting the Employer Supported Policing scheme to councils.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Note the letter from the Secretary of State (attached as **Appendix A**) on the Employer Supported Policing Scheme and the LGA Chairman's response.
2. Comment on and suggest ways that the LGA could promote the ESP scheme to its member authorities.

Action

Officers to action Member suggestions as appropriate.

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Employer Supported Policing

Background

1. In its Policing White Paper, 'Policing in the 21st Century', the Home Office committed to increasing the number of special constables from 15,000 serving in 2010.
2. The National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) has been running a programme to promote the role of special constables. The Employer Supported Policing (ESP) programme was designed to enable the police to engage with employers about special constables, both so employers could better support their staff who were already special constables, and to encourage employers to allow staff to become special constables.
3. As a means of increasing the number of special constables, the government has been looking to the public sector to adopt the ESP programme, with initial work concentrating on Whitehall departments. The Home Office is also keen that local authorities adopt the ESP scheme, and to that end the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government wrote to the LGA Chairman shortly before Christmas seeking the LGA's support in promoting the ESP programme to councils. A copy of the letter and the LGA Chairman's response to it is set out in **Appendix A**.
4. As some members will recall, the Board received a presentation on the ESP programme from James Deller at the NPIA at its meeting in October 2010. At the time the Board expressed broad support for the ESP programme but did not consider that the timing was right for a major recruitment drive among council employees given the economic climate.

The Employer Supported Policing programme

5. The ESP programme was developed by the NPIA in order to provide employers with some certainty of the benefits to them as an organisation in having staff who are special constables, and consistency and clarity around the operation of the scheme. The NPIA therefore established four options under the ESP programme for employers, ranging from simply promoting the concept of special constables, to giving significant support to staff who are special constables, including giving them time off for training and paid time off for special constable duties. The NPIA argue that there are considerable benefits for an employer in supporting their staff to be special constables including lower staff turnover, greater staff motivation and loyalty to the business and increased training for

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staff in a range of areas that can be useful to the business, such as conflict resolution, problem solving and decision-making.

Local government and the ESP

6. A number of councils already try to encourage people to serve as special constables and some have adopted the ESP scheme. Greater numbers of councils could take up the ESP scheme however, and this would provide a considerable pool of people from which special constables could be drawn. Councils also regularly communicate with residents, businesses and organisations in their area in a variety of ways, and this could provide a further means of promoting the ESP scheme.

The LGA and promoting ESP

7. In his response to the Secretary of State's letter, the LGA Chairman committed the LGA to highlighting council involvement in the ESP scheme through *first* magazine, and to discuss with the NPIA other means of promoting the ESP scheme to councils. Members' views are sought on what else the LGA might do to promote the ESP scheme to its members.
8. In its last discussion on this issue the NPIA were seeking an amendment to the guidance the LGA produces on leave policies for staff so that special constables were specifically mentioned alongside staff who serve for example as magistrates or in the Territorial Army. An option that Board members may wish to consider would be replicating the work the LGA undertook in 2009 with the Ministry of Defence to produce good practice advice for councils on working with members of staff who are military reservists (and can be found at: <http://www.lge.gov.uk/lge/core/page.do?pagelid=119731>). Something similar could be produced with the NPIA on special constables, which would also provide an opportunity to promote the ESP scheme to councils.

Conclusion and next steps

9. In the light of members' discussions and suggestions officers will contact the NPIA to outline the LGA's views on how it can best promote the ESP scheme, and seek any necessary supporting materials or information need to do this.

Financial Implications

10. Any work on the ESP scheme will be met from existing LGA resources.