



Scottish Police Federation

PO Box 27163, GLASGOW, G3 9EZ

Joint Central Committee Equality Subject Committee

Ref: CS/DK/CR

MINUTES

25 March 2021

1. Attendance and Opening of Meeting

David Kennedy (meeting Chair)	Deputy General Secretary
James Thomson	AGSE
Caroline Macnaughton	North Area Committee
Andy Sawers	North Area Committee
Shirley Moran	North Area Committee
Yvonne Sloan (Reserve)	North Area Committee
Graham Ross	East Area Committee
Darren Gallagher	East Area Committee
Richard Wood (Reserve)	East Area Committee
David Reid (Reserve)	East Area Committee
Ian Stephen (Reserve)	East Area Committee
Jenny Shanks	West Area Committee
Jennie MacFarlane	West Area Committee
Sarah Robertson	West Area Committee
Adam Peppard	West Area Committee
Dougie Chalmers	West Area Committee
Cara Riley	Administrator
Jayne Monkhouse	Equality Advisor

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the meeting was held by Video Conference. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming those in attendance and invited all to take an active part.

Apologies were received from John Burgoyne, Norman Taylor, James McLaren & David MacKay. Graeme Mathers attended as an Observer.

Caroline MacNaughton was welcomed to the role of Deputy Secretary for the North Area Committee with the portfolio for Equality.

2. Minute of Previous Meeting

The Minute of the previous meeting held on 13 January 2021, had been circulated with JCC Circular 5 of 2021, and was adopted as a true record.

3. PNB(S) Equality Working Group

The AGSE reported that there had been no meetings of this Group since the last Equality Subject Committee meeting.

4. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Employment Group

The AGSE informed the Committee that the last meeting of this Group took place on 3 February 2021, with the next meeting scheduled for 2 June 2021. He reported that the equality outcomes relative to the next period of review for the Mainstreaming Report, continued to be developed, and is the subject of various work-streams, including Brake the Race Ceiling, Smarter Working and Maximising Attendance. The SPF have continued presence and continue to make valuable contributions based on members' experiences.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Human Rights Strategic Oversight Board

The AGSE advised the Committee that DCC Fiona Taylor is the Chair of this Board, and that the first meeting was held on 1 March 2021. He stated that the Strategic Oversight Board (SOB), provides process and governance on EDI work within the Police Service, combining both and providing opportunity to take initiatives forward. Whilst this was the first meeting of the SOB, legacy business from the previous Strategy Group required to be concluded, to ensure a seamless transition.

5. AGSE Update

The AGSE informed the Committee that, since taking up this role, he has attended various meetings to discuss relevant matters, and is seeking to find better ways of working together to strengthen the links with colleagues within Police Scotland and the Diversity Staff Associations.

He stated that matters relating to Pregnancy, Ill Health Retirement, and Injury on Duty, are being progressed, and that considerable benefits have already come to fruition. It is hoped that those members will see tangible results as the work with Police Scotland continues.

The AGSE highlighted the good work carried out by FTOBs in respect of pregnancy related issues, and made specific mention of the work undertaken by Shirley Moran and Jennie McFarlane.

6. Area Updates

6.1 East

Graham Ross informed the Committee that since the last meeting, there had been some positive

movement in respect of Ill Health cases. A new SMP had been in place since February, and the impact was almost instant.

He reported that there were 18 officers progressing through the IH process. Since the start of February, three of these officers have received SMP appointments, whilst another four had received appointment dates. One member's case had been progressed to the final stage for retiral.

Graham highlighted that all East members in this process have had their pay maintained, with 13 being confirmed automatically due to ongoing delays. He advised that appeal letters were still required for the remaining five; however, none had yet been rejected. Monthly meetings now take place to review all cases with the HR lead for the East area.

He further stated that seven officers remain long-term sick but have had their pay maintained. He summarised that none of these officers are in the IH process; their absences relate to life altering illnesses such as Heart Attacks, Cancers and Strokes. There remains a further 10 officers on half pay who are being supported via the Group Insurance Scheme.

The Committee were informed that Grievances continue to drop following resolutions, with only two remaining. He anticipated that one case is likely to be resolved within the next week, whilst the other related to an officer from out-with the area who is receiving support.

Graham summarised that whilst the IH process has taken up the majority of time in the East, there is encouraging engagement across Divisions, with Divisions getting the message regarding home working; J Division specifically excelling themselves in supporting members with pregnancy issues.

6.2 North Area

Caroline Macnaughton provided an update for the North area and reported that there are currently no grievances ongoing within the North area, however Ill health cases remain as previously intimated.

Caroline reported that priority IH cases have been escalated, but none had yet been assessed or concluded. She stated that the most common cases appear to be linked with mental health and anxiety, with three cases involving PTSD connected to on-duty traumatic incidents. Two of these cases related to officers fighting for recognition of the impact of having Autistic Spectrum Conditions.

Caroline stated that there had been focus on supporting officers and their supervisors with absence and performance issues associated with Menopause. Wellbeing Sergeants from the three Northern Divisions had joined forces to produce an Awareness and Training Programme, along with online drop-in Menopause Cafes. The sessions were scheduled to be held online, and assessment on officer impact would be carried out. It was noted that this might influence Flexible-Working Applications, and possibly highlight or generate gender-biased complaints.

She highlighted that there remains concern around pregnant officers at work with the ongoing risk of COVID-19. However, she stated that there appears to be a greater awareness around the necessity of risk assessments and the support of officers coming towards their third trimester.

Caroline raised the issue around the level of service provided by the Occupational Health Service, Optima. Common complaints include:

- Reports received being contradictory in the advice provided or too vague.
- Reports received do not provide advice regarding support measures that can be implemented or therapeutic advice to assist in improving officer welfare or return to work.
- Failure in communication with lost/misfiled paperwork.

She confirmed that these complaints had been acknowledged by Divisional Senior Management, who appeared as frustrated as the subject officers. Discussion followed regarding this issue, with the AGSE confirming that these issues are being escalated. The Committee were encouraged to notify him directly of any similar issues or evidence of Optima providing an inadequate service. The Chair reported that he was scheduled to meet with Jude Helliker, Director of People & Development, regarding several concerns around the Ill Health Retiral process and would provide an update to the Committee at the next meeting.

Caroline advised that a Wellbeing Board had been re-launched in the North area, to raise any ongoing welfare issues or trends. Joint SPF/Wellbeing Officers Drop-in Surgeries were to be arranged, and it was hoped this would be mirrored across A and N Divisions, with assistance being provided by local area Federation Representatives. A new on-line Wellbeing Newsletter had been produced in D Division, and awareness would be raised in respect of SPF support.

6.3 West Area

Jenny Shanks provided an update for the West area and reported 25 live Grievances, where members have sought SPF support. She informed the Committee that she personally is providing support to 13 individuals involved in that process. It was highlighted that there were some Grievance and Equality cases, which were receiving legal assistance, and she provided updates on progression. Many of the Grievances involved perceived discrimination, on a variety of the protected characteristics, and arrangements have been made to meet with other staff and diversity associations next month to share ideas.

She reported that support is being provided to a number of those currently progressing through the ill health process, as well as other officers who have serious or terminal illnesses, significant mental health issues, anxiety, stress and/or PTSD. She highlighted that the new Selected Medical Practitioner was being assisted by a part time SMP, as a result of which, there had been progress with some of the priority ill health cases. The Committee were reminded of the SPF Group Insurance scheme, which includes critical illness benefit, but which must be claimed within 90 days of diagnosis as a qualifying illness/condition.

Jenny voiced concerns that as lockdown restrictions begin to ease, it is anticipated that many pregnant officers with underlying health conditions, would be expected to return to offices. The Committee were reminded that individual risk assessments would require to be carried out before any return to duty could occur and that Health and safety considerations would remain for some time.

Jenny advised the Committee that her post of Vice Chair would be up for election at the next West Area Committee meeting in June 2021, and that should any Federation Representative from the West Area wish further information on the Equality portfolio, to contact her via email or telephone call.

7. Consultations

The AGSE reported there had been no specific equality related consultations since the last meeting.

8. Tribunal etc. Rulings & Legal Assistance

The AGSE provided a summary of recent determinations.

9. SPF Biennial Conference 2021

The Chair advised the Committee that the on-line Conference was now scheduled to occur on 26 April 2021, and invitations had been issued. A guest speaker from Working Families had been invited to give a short input on behalf of the Committee, which would tie in with the Guide to Flexible Working launch.

10. Training

Jayne Monkhouse OBE presented training on Understanding Reasonable Adjustments.

The AGSE stated he was looking to develop training within the Equality role.

11. Competent Business

The Committee were updated on the move to manage future Equality Subject Committee meetings via Microsoft Teams. Communications had previously been circulated directing representatives to the Equality Subject Committee Teams Group.

12. Closure

The Chair informed the Committee that future meetings will continue to be carried out by video conferencing until further notice.

Date of next meeting: 14 July 2021.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and closed the meeting.