

GWENT POLICE AUTHORITY

Equality & Human Resources Committee

Date: 15 June 2009 **Item No:** 8g

Heading: Independent Advisory Group

Report Author: Chief Constable

SUMMARY

This report provides an update to members on the review and development of the Independent Advisory Group (IAG).

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That members note the content of this report.

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Gwent Police's IAG was established in 2004. This was as a result of the Macpherson Inquiry which examined serious policing issues arising out of the murder of Stephen Lawrence. The Macpherson Report severely criticised aspects of policing in relation to the investigation of 'major or critical incidents', in particular where these may have an impact upon public confidence.
- 1.3 Until recently, the IAG had only six members, all except one representing various BME communities, and the majority from the Newport area. Over the last few years the IAG has sat within a range of workstreams and has been managed in a variety of ways. Current members have voiced concerns about the lack of consistency in the way that they are supported which has led to some confusion over their roles and responsibilities. It is also recognised that current membership is not representative of the diverse communities within Gwent.
- 1.2 In March 2009, recommendations were produced in line with the HMIC Critical Incidents review. These recommendations are informing the development of the IAG.
- 1.3 Responsibility for the IAG's is now firmly placed within the Neighbourhood Policing workstream and sits with T/Inspector Alison Hitchen (Neighbourhood Development), being overseen by Deputy Chief Constable Napier and supported by members by the Community Cohesion Team.
- 1.4 On the 15th of April over 30 community members, identified through existing contacts from across Gwent as potential IAG members, attended an event held at the Parkway Hotel. The evening was designed to inform attendees of

the roles and responsibilities of an IAG and introduce them to some of the consultative activities they would be involved in through a series of workshops.

- 1.5 As a result, an additional 8 members of the community have now been recruited as new IAG members.

The new members offer better representation of the wider minority communities within Gwent being able to comment on disability, gender, sexuality, age, language, mental health and victim issues.

Whilst the membership is recently improved, this is an ongoing piece of work to ensure resilience and further development.

2. PROPOSAL FOR CONSIDERATION BY COMMITTEE/CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 All members, existing and new, have been invited to attend a second meeting at Police HQ on the 17th of June. During this meeting we will begin to address the issues of concern that have arisen previously. Knowledge of the force re-structure and rank and role identification will be addressed in a presentation by Alison Hitchen supported by written material. The Police Authority's Neil Taylor will offer a presentation around the role of the Authority.
- 2.2 This will be the first in a series of several 'induction' sessions that the group have requested, examining Gwent Police as a Force and exploring the IAG's roles and responsibilities.
- 2.3 Currently the Force Critical Incidents Policy is being developed in line with National Guidelines. The importance of the involvement of the IAG in Critical Incidents has been discussed with its author (Insp Paul Jackson). As a result, the draft document due for consultation includes clear guidelines for Command Teams around the utilisation of the IAG during Critical Incident management. This will be further progressed, and the IAG will receive detailed input around their role in these circumstances.
- 2.4 It is recognised that there are internal awareness issues around the role of the IAG. An internal Marketing Strategy is currently being considered in collaboration with the Corporate Communications department.

3. STAFFING/PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 T/Inspector Alison Hitchen will continue to lead on the development of the IAG. Administrative duties will be carried out by Sarah Wheatstone (Community Cohesion) and co-ordination of agenda items and support to members / Chair will be provided by Heather Powell (Community Cohesion). The existing acting IAG Chair will be invited to retain her position during this developmental phase and the possibility of electing a new Chair and Vice-Chair will be looked at in the near future. This will be led by the wishes of the members, with support of the organisation.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The IAG is currently allocated an annual budget of £5k. This will be reviewed in line with the group's development, identified training needs etc. Members are paid an hourly rate of £15 for attending meetings. This will also be reviewed in partnership with members, in line with national IAG guidance which suggests that formal payment may not always be the most productive incentive. In any case, allowances will need to be made for travel expenses, refreshment costs, possible time away from work and any other out of pocket expenses.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The IAG's Force Policy and Terms of Reference will shortly be reviewed and amended in line with the structural changes that are taking place within the group. Further clarification will be given to their role and responsibilities, particularly around their function as a 'Critical Friend'. Both documents will be subject to thorough consultation through appropriate avenues and Equality Impact Assessment consideration will be given throughout the process of development.

6. PROJECT ASSESSMENT FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY MATTERS

- 6.1 This project/proposal has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Police Force's Equality Schemes, and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group.
- 6.2 A key objective of the development of the IAG is to ensure that it has a better representation of a range of communities from across Gwent, embracing all strands of diversity.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 There is potential risk to the organisation if members are not security vetted and have access to restricted material or deal with sensitive incidents, particularly where those incidents have the potential for significant impact on wider communities.
- 7.2 Existing members have completed the necessary vetting forms as required by Force policy. New members have been issued with forms which they are completing and bringing to the next meeting. In line with ACPO IAG Guidance, a negative indicator on a vetting form will NOT automatically exclude a person from becoming an IAG member. Each case will be individually assessed and risk managed in order to avoid unnecessarily losing valuable community experience.
- 7.3 Gwent Police will have clear benefits from utilising the skills and experience of members of our minority communities. There are clear risks posed by not consulting effectively with our communities in terms of the affect on confidence.

8. STAYING AHEAD (2011 REVIEW)

8.1 The vision for the Independent Advisory Group complies with the vision, aims, principles and objectives of the Staying Ahead 2011 Project Review. It will:-

- Ensure that minority groups are engaged, informed and reassured, particularly in the case of critical incidents
- Help to deliver effective Neighbourhood Policing through consultation
- Assist in delivering a high quality service to the customer in line with the Quality of Service Commitment
- Build public trust and confidence

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The IAG is still in a developmental phase but with the right structure and support will become a valuable Force resource, providing strategic community links and assisting with the development of customer-focussed policing services.

10. CONTACT OFFICER

10.1 T/Inspector Alison Hitchen (Community Safety)

11. APPENDICES

None.