

PRINCIPLES FOR POLICING

Policies and actions designed to promote changes in policing must:

- be firmly based on the premise that they improve (objectively and tangibly), the policing service; and
- when they involve breaking natural expectations and traditions do so with unimpeachable generosity and sympathy towards those who feel that they are to be disadvantaged.

What has already been done, or is happening at present

- The Sheehy Report, into police pay and conditions of service was a conscious effort to change fundamentally the character of policing, from a disciplined, hierarchical organisation, to a modern 'service delivery' one. Proposals on new performance appraisal, unsatisfactory performance, and misconduct systems (replacing the current discipline system) are in the process of being implemented.
- The Fundamental Review built up a vision of policing for Northern Ireland with local area commands responsible for the totality of policing activity within their area, working closely alongside District Councils, and with other statutory agencies, in partnership with the local community.
- The Police Bill, by transferring management control of policing resources to the Chief Constable, opens the way for him to move towards that ideal.

- By introducing police planning and objective setting, the Bill introduces mechanisms for community input into the overall policy direction of policing; and increases the accountability of the police to the community, through the Police Authority.
- The Bill also sets out for the first time what the duties of Constables are (and so, also, are not). A constable's primary duty is to protect life, to uphold the law, and to bring offenders to justice before the Courts.
- The application by the Bill to both the Police Authority and to the RUC of Section 19 of the Constitution Act (which will prohibit either body from discriminating in the exercise of their functions, on the basis of political opinion or religious belief) clarifies that the police are not there to uphold one particular political or religious viewpoint against others; and expressly prohibits them from so doing.
- The Hayes Review on police complaints is in the process of being implemented by the Police Bill. It will create the Office of Police Ombudsman which will be in place by March 1999.
- "Your Voice - Your Choice" the Government's consultation paper, is designed to stimulate debate on how to strengthen the Police Authority, and how it could build its community representative role, so enhancing the community's voice. It also looks at ways of enhancing community police

partnerships, at all levels, and invites views and suggestions.

Other possible developments

- Planning has commenced within the police on developing and implementing a 'policing in partnership' approach. This is designed to improve the response to crime and disorder, and help create safer communities.
- Issues such as flying of flags, and symbols, need to be addressed too. We recognised the sensitivities, and the importance attached to such issues and consider that all views must be expressed and taken into account. We believe this is best done as part of a coherent approach, producing an agreed result, flowing from the Talks process.
- Finally, in an entirely peaceful environment, major change could be instigated along the lines outlined in the Fundamental Review, bringing the RUC back to near its normal size. Such changes would take several years, and the redundancies involved would have to be dealt with generously and sympathetically, incurring very substantial costs.

Policing: the vision

Our vision is:

- of a police service recruited proportionately across the entire community,

- policing fairly, impartially, efficiently and effectively, in constructive partnerships with the community at all levels;
- delivering a service based firmly on principles of professional integrity, and protection of human rights; and so;
- unambiguously accepted and actively supported by the entire community.