

LIAISON BETWEEN THE RUC AND NI GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTSMINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT RUC HEADQUARTERS ON TUESDAY 25 JUNE 1985

Present:

Mr Bloomfield, Head of NICS	Sir John Hermon, Chief Constable
Mr Stephens, NIO	[REDACTED], DCC
Mr Buxton, NIO	[REDACTED], S/ACC 'C & E'
Mr Barry, DOE	[REDACTED], S/ACC 'A & B'
Dr Hayes, DHSS	[REDACTED], ACC 'Ops'
Mr Crozier, DED	[REDACTED], CAO
Mr Crowther, DHSS	
Mrs Sung, PS/Mr Bloomfield	

In attendance: Ch. Supt. Sinclair, Command Secretariat  
Mr K Lindsay, Command Secretariat

1. The Chief Constable welcomed those present to RUC Headquarters.

2. Progress Reports

(a) Child abuse

Reasonable progress had been made and all agencies were working together on this problem. Subjectively, DHSS opinion was that the volume of such crime was not increasing although the willingness to talk about, and report it, was. It was agreed that they should continue the discussion with all concerned, including DENI.

(b) Revitalising Belfast City Centre

DOE reported twenty-five shop and office development schemes in various stages of planning or completion, increased use of car parks and public transport as indicative of the revival of Belfast City Centre. Relations with RUC on these and other pedestrian, traffic and environmental schemes was good and tribute was paid for the role of [REDACTED] as Liaison Officer with DOE. The meeting was informed that this position was now filled by S/ACC Whiteside.

3. The Chief Constable warned that too much publicity regarding normalisation may prompt PIRA into increased bombing of the city centre. In discussion, it was agreed that a balance was required so that, while positive statements were required to encourage inward investment the timing and implications of these should be carefully considered. This was an area where the Head of Information Services could probably assist and Mr Bloomfield undertook to involve him.

Grants to Community groups - security implications

4. There was concern at the growth of community groups applying for discretionary assistance from Government Departments, particularly when some of these groups had been infiltrated by paramilitary organisations. In instances where clear and definite links were established, assistance would be withheld. The existing arrangements for co-ordination and dissemination of intelligence on such matters were satisfactory but it was agreed that the RUC at senior level should be advised of the criteria to be used by Government Departments to ensure a common approach.

5. Construction industry fraud/bogus security firms

Mr Barry reported on his contacts with CBI and representatives of the construction industry and efforts to encourage them to reduce fraud, particularly the payment of protection money. There was disappointment in RUC circles at the failure of the recent court case although efforts in this area have had an effect and racketeers were not using the system with such impunity. All were agreed that as this was a problem of considerable proportion and a major source of revenue for paramilitaries, an ad hoc group of all parties (Government, RUC, Builders Federation) should be set up at fairly senior level by Mr Bloomfield to discuss further action required.

Drug abuse

6. While there was national interest in this subject the situation in Northern Ireland did not constitute a major drug problem. The dual policy of the RUC Drug Squad was to enforce the law vigorously against drug pushers but with a high priority

also being given to education, prevention and counselling of users. The much higher profile adopted by the new Head of the Drugs Squad has resulted in dramatic increases in arrests, offences detected and drugs seized in the first 4 months of 1985 compared to the same period in previous years. DHSS questioned the possibility of an increase in the movement or use of drugs in border areas and also the movement of veterinary medicines from south to north, but neither of these activities was seen as significant by the RUC.

7. Problems caused by derelict buildings in interface areas

In some interface areas, derelict housing was being used as cover by young people to attack both police and civilians. Previous experience has shown that terrorists also use such premises for similar purposes. It was agreed that DOE, assisted by NIHE, would feed a paper to SCH for consideration of the problem.

X | The RUC would provide a list of such properties as a basis for the paper.

8. Housing situation in Belfast

On the general question of redevelopment the Chief Constable asked if RUC security constraints at the planning stage were an impediment. It was generally thought that the system of consultation was now well established and criteria generally known but that it would be useful to have a review of the situation in interface areas, again through SCH.

9. RUC reports on intimidation to NI Housing Executive

Community Relations Branch of the RUC had experienced difficulty in that some members of the public were given the impression at Housing Executive offices that the police were responsible for refusing applications for alternative accommodation. The letters provided by the police are a statement of facts concerning an incident as reported by a complainant. They would not include hearsay, allegations or offer an opinion as to whether the complainants were in any physical danger. Mr Barry undertook to mention this at Chief Executive level.

10. Access to motor vehicle records

A recent terrorist case had highlighted the wide availability of records contained in DVLCO Coleraine. Apart from those groups named in the regulations, any person who can show reasonable cause for such information can have access to the records on payment of the set fee. It was agreed that the RUC would pass their views to the DOE, who would review the present arrangements.

11. RUC Building programme (Rayner)

Grave concern was expressed that the implementation of the Rayner Report on the RUC building programme was much slower than anticipated. There was an acknowledged backlog of projects in relation to RUC buildings and it was an area which could adversely affect morale and where the Force could be open to charges of neglect if action was not forthcoming quickly. In subsequent discussion it was explained that the DOE were giving the RUC a high priority but that there was a chronic mis-match between available staff and the total workload. Resources were often stretched and the problem compounded because of urgent tasks such as the recent bomb in Chichester Street or projects where security considerations dictated early completion (eg protection of VIP). Recruitment of staff, particularly at senior level was slow. However, it was fully accepted that this was a pressing problem, to be addressed with all possible energy and speed.

12. Any other business

The Chief Constable raised the question of dialogue at senior level between officials in the Republic and Northern Ireland, particularly on matters where a security or terrorist dimension could be anticipated. The normal interchange of information was on social security, education, agriculture and similar matters. It was only in such subjects as the electricity inter-connector and the Newry/Dundalk road that security would be a consideration. In these, the RUC would continue to be fully involved and consulted.