

CHAPTER 2 : METHOD OF OPERATION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

2.1 When we were appointed in February, 1989, we were aware that issues of concern to the disciplined services could arise from a number of sources -

- (a) recommendations from the Rennie Committee;
- (b) the Administration's views on the Rennie Committee recommendations;
- (c) reactions from the disciplined services to the Rennie Committee recommendations;
- (d) on-going issues; and
- (e) new issues.

2.2 In order to deal with these in a systematic and fair manner, we decided to draw up a work programme in conjunction with the disciplined services. We also decided that the disciplined services should make submissions to us and should have an opportunity to make representations on these submissions directly to Members.

Work Programme

2.3 Our terms of reference provide that the heads of the disciplined services, or the Official Side or the Staff Side of the Police Force Council or the Disciplined Services Consultative Council may refer to us any matter relating to pay and conditions of service in the disciplined services. In practice, the majority of submissions to us have come from the heads of the disciplined services, with about 10% coming from the Administration.

2.4 At approximately six-month intervals, we invite the disciplined services and the Administration to identify issues which they want us to consider, indicating the priority which they attach to each issue, together with a brief description of the issue. On the basis of this information, we then draw up a work programme setting the time-frame for each issue and taking into account -

- (a) the priorities sought by the disciplined services or the Administration;
- (b) the need to allow sufficient time for research and analysis to be undertaken on complex issues; and
- (c) the need to spread the workload of the Office of the Secretary General.

2.5 Work programmes are passed to each of the disciplined services and the Administration and constitute the timetable to which we work. Both managements and staff associations are aware of when each issue will be considered and we inform the heads of the disciplined services if there are any indications that we might have to delay any issue in the work programme. Out of the 78 submissions we have considered to date, 64 (82%) have been considered on the dates indicated in the work programme or earlier; we have had to defer consideration of only 14, mainly to allow the managements of the disciplined services to prepare further information, to re-consider the submissions, or the Administration to formulate its views.

Procedures

2.6 Our terms of reference stipulate that we shall operate through Sub-Committees. All submissions to the Standing Committee are, therefore, considered in the first instance either by the General Disciplined Services Sub-Committee, the ICAC Sub-Committee or the Police Sub-Committee. When we receive a formal submission, the Office of the Secretary General seeks the views of the Administration and carries out the necessary research and analysis; it is frequently necessary for the Office also to seek clarification or further information from the management of the disciplined service concerned. The issue is then presented, in the form of a discussion paper to the relevant Sub-Committee for consideration. If considered necessary, visits by Members of the relevant Sub-Committee and/or staff of the Office of the Secretary General are arranged to enable them to familiarise themselves with the issue which we have been asked to consider.

2.7 Our terms of reference provide that we advise on matters relating to the creation of new grades and ranks, and permanent posts remunerated at levels equivalent to or above the bottom point of the directorate in the general civil service, except for head of services posts. In order to reduce the processing time for submissions and to maintain consistency with the procedures adopted for the rest of the civil service, we have agreed with the Administration that Civil Service Branch will continue to process submissions from the disciplined services for the creation of new ranks and directorate posts and to submit the proposals to us for advice. We informed the disciplined services of these procedures in June, 1990.

2.8 It is our practice to invite departmental managements and representatives of staff associations to attend our Sub-Committee meetings to express their views. Normally, when the date of a Sub-Committee meeting has been fixed, the disciplined service concerned will be notified and asked to specify who will attend. The management is asked to determine whether the staff associations wish to

attend the Sub-Committee meeting. A similar invitation is sent to the Administration. Our purpose in inviting departmental and staff association representatives to meetings of the Sub-Committees is to give them an opportunity to clarify points made in their submissions, to provide whatever supplementary justification they wish, to avoid any possible misunderstandings and to ensure that they are satisfied that their views have been clearly understood by Members.

2.9 The Sub-Committee, after hearing the views of the departmental and staff association representatives and those of the Administration, considers the issue and formulates the recommendation which it wishes to submit to the Standing Committee. At a subsequent meeting, the Standing Committee considers the issue and takes into account the views expressed by the departmental management, staff associations and the Administration and the recommendation of the Sub-Committee. The Standing Committee then agrees on how it wishes to advise the Governor on the submission. A letter setting out the Standing Committee's advice is sent to the Governor shortly after the meeting.

2.10 Once the Administration has informed us that a decision has been taken on our advice to the Governor, the Secretary General writes to the head of the disciplined service concerned, informing him of our advice and the reasons which led us to our recommendation. The heads of the other disciplined services are also notified by the Secretary General of our advice to the Governor. Our intention has been, and remains, to respond to the submissions we receive as promptly as possible after we have tendered our advice to the Governor.

2.11 The Standing Committee is an advisory body and does not decide on proposals from the disciplined services. Hence, we do not deal with appeals against decisions taken by the Administration on the basis of our advice. However, if the Administration considers that an appeal from the disciplined service constitutes sufficient grounds for reconsideration, it may submit the case to us for advice in the normal way.

Meetings of the Standing Committee and its Sub-Committees

2.12 The Standing Committee and its Sub-Committees meet on a regular basis and, as a matter of convenience, meetings are arranged at least six months in advance. The first meeting of the Standing Committee was held on 22 March, 1989 and between then and April, 1991, the Standing Committee has had 17 meetings, the General Disciplined Services Sub-Committee has had 14 meetings, the ICAC Sub-Committee 4 meetings, and the Police Sub-Committee 13

meetings. In addition, a Project Liaison Group, established during a Job Evaluation exercise in late 1989, held 5 meetings and an Ad-hoc Sub-Committee on Pensions held 3 meetings.

2.13 Since February, 1989, we have considered 78 submissions from the disciplined services. They cover a wide range of issues, from pay and allowances to conditions of service. Details of these submissions and our views on them are set out in subsequent chapters. A list of all of the submissions considered by us up to April, 1991 is at Appendix D. The Administration has accepted our advice to the Governor on these issues.

Visits to the Disciplined Services

2.14 We conduct regular visits to the disciplined services to provide us with an opportunity to learn about aspects of the work of the disciplined services, to meet and talk to the staff and management, to learn more about their problems and aspirations and to understand the actual conditions on the ground. We also obtain feedback on how our advice to the Governor has been received. We find these visits useful and appreciate the opportunity to talk openly and frankly to staff. Without exception, we have been impressed by the dedication and hard work displayed at all levels throughout the disciplined services.

2.15 In addition to these visits, Members make work-related visits in order to gain first-hand information on issues which have been submitted for our consideration. We also make visits of topical interest. We have made a total of 35 visits to the disciplined services and found them most useful. A list of both general visits and work-related and topical visits which we have made is at Appendix E.