British Transport Police Authority

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Report to: Police Authority
Agenda item: 10
Date: 11 March 2010
Subject: Accounting Officer for BTPA/BTP
Sponsor: Chief Executive
Author: Chief Executive
For: Decision

1. Purpose of paper

This paper details the new proposals and the implications attached regarding the position of Accounting Officer.

2. Background

The Permanent Secretary to the Department for Transport appointed the Chief Constable as the Accounting Officer for BTPA and BTP when the Authority was established. Over the years this position has come to be seen as increasingly inappropriate as it made the Chief Constable accountable for the work of his own governance body. Furthermore as Accounting Officer the Chief Constable is accountable for the Authority's work in setting a budget and recovering the costs of BTP from the PSA holders and in consequence for the development and application of the charging models, this is clearly something that the Chief Executive of the Authority not the Chief Constable should carry accountability for.

3. New Proposals

In response to a request from the Chair, the Department has re-examined this position and it has now come forward with new proposals.

The effect of these will be to make the Chief Executive to the Authority the Accounting Officer for BTPA with the Chief Constable being the Accounting Officer for BTP. This will more accurately reflect their actual responsibilities. The changes will not affect the Chief Constables responsibilities in relation to policing.

The new arrangements will also provide for shared accountabilities where these are appropriate and formal agreements between the Authority and BTP when one is providing services for the other.

The new arrangements are captured in formal documentation that has been prepared by the DfT. Treasury rules governing Accounting Officers require a single responsible official at every stage. Hence the Permanent Secretary will appoint the Chief Executive as the Accounting Officer for BTPA as it is to the Authority that the Department formally relates. The Chief Executive will then appoint the Chief Constable as an additional accounting officer.

Appended to this report are late drafts of the formal texts for information. Final amendments are being agreed between Authority and BTP staff and with officials at the DfT and should be ready to be tabled at the Authority's meeting.

4. Implications

In all respects these new arrangements will lead to improved and strengthened governance.

The Authority should note that under the new arrangements two of its employees, the Chief Executive and Chief Constable once appointed as Accounting Officers will have duties and responsibilities that cannot be fettered by the Authority. However as those duties and responsibilities all relate to probity and the proper conduct of the BTPA/BTP's affairs there is no reason to think that their exercise would ever be contrary to the Authority's wishes. The Chief Constable of course already has such freedoms in relation to Policing.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The Authority is asked to support the new Accounting Officer arrangements and to delegate to the Chair, authority to agree on its behalf and with the Chief Constable and Chief Executive the final text of the appointments and their effective date.