

## Open book

There has been great speculation around a possible subscriptions increase for Police Federation members, what's the truth behind the rumours? Martyn Mordecai, treasurer of the Police Federation, answers questions on the subject

**There has been a great deal of debate about subscriptions increases, what is actually happening with subs and why?**

At present subscriptions will remain at £17.55 per calendar month and the matter will be debated at length at the Police Federation conference in May this year. There are a number of reasons we are looking at subscriptions rates. At present the Federation will fund matters criminal that are on-duty related up to and including magistrates' court. If it is a crown court matter then the legal aid scheme takes over. The government

has cost you £150 an hour, you are only going to receive £62 an hour back (current average legal aid rate). The first crown court that moves to the new system is Blackfriars and then it rolls out across the country and is completed by June 30, 2010.

I think most members will agree that to expect officers to pay for their own crown court trial and take a 'hit' out of their own pockets if they are acquitted, is totally unacceptable. So the Police Federation took the decision that we would cover the costs of crown court trials for on-duty matters for police officers.

years or so which has often coincided with a recession, it happened in the mid 1970s, 1980s and in 1995. Costs have just outstripped pay rises.



**Members will not lose out**

The detail is still being finalised but there will be full debate at conference about future membership subscriptions, when an increase would take effect and the current way in which the Federation shares the subscription monies coming in. The changes in legal aid has focused the minds of the national committee and branch boards who are open to a frank discussion about how best the subscription income should be shared to best benefit the membership.

**When would the potential subs increases take effect?**

This would take place by January 2011 but we will only have a definite answer at our annual conference when the matter can be fully debated.

**Does this mean there will be a negative impact on what service the Federation provides to members?**

No. The changes we are making are in order to ensure we still provide the same service to members. We will bring in new legal aid provision and protect members, there will be no change in the provisions we make. Subscribing members are still covered for over a number of issues including defamation, misconduct criminal and civil matters.

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decided that, as of the January 1, 2010, legal aid will cease for crown court and will go over to 'means testing'. The threshold is an annual income of £15,000 or less and under the new rules, joint income is taken into consideration, along with £20,000 or more equity in any property. So, as you can see, no police officer would be eligible.

The other fundamental change that the government has introduced is that you will pay for your trial, in instalments, on the run up to the actual trial. If you are acquitted you will receive a refund but only at legal aid rates. So if your counsel

**Is the Federation bankrupt?**

No, the Federation is certainly not bankrupt. I appreciate there has been lots of speculation about what has been happening financially. No one can get away from the fact that everyone is going through a hard time economically but there are many other issues which have impacted on finances, including the changes to legal aid (outlined above) and we want to ensure we still offer the same quality service to members.

The Federation has historically readjusted subscriptions every ten