



Mark Botham, chairman of North Yorkshire Police Federation

United we stand?

One thing which unites the Police Federation, ACPO, APA and the Superintendents' Association is that special priority payments (SPPs) are divisive and bureaucratic, and automatically unfair to 60 percent of police officers.

Introduced as part of the pay deal in 2003, SPPs have remained a controversial topic ever since. They were aimed at rewarding frontline operational officers who carry a high level of responsibility, have demanding working conditions or are in roles that are hard to fill but have prompted many complaints that they are awarded unfairly and cause division.

In April 2009 we made representations to our senior leadership team that it would be more equitable, fair, consistent and easier if – in line with new national agreements, SPP was paid monthly instead of annually. We were advised to seek the views of our members and therefore ran a poll on our website. Of those responding 57.6 percent felt it should be scrapped, 25.7 percent felt it should be paid monthly and 16.7 percent said it was okay as it is.

It would be no exaggeration to say that as 2009 progressed the Federation office and our representatives on area were inundated with complaints being raised about the inconsistencies in the way the 2009 scheme was being applied in force and that the procedures appeared to be interpreted in an inconsistent, unfair and inappropriate manner.

The administration of the scheme and the decision of North Yorkshire Police in December 2009 to suspend payments under the scheme caused immense anger and disappointment to our members with some experiencing financial hardship. It is a matter of record that at the Police Negotiating Board held on 13 October 2005 the Official Side proposed that the current special priority payment scheme be phased out. It is now 2010. SPP is still in existence.

Earlier this year we wrote to the chairman of our Police Authority and to the Chief Constable to formally request that the Joint Branch Board is involved in the decisions around the operation of the 2010 scheme (although not who will and who will not get SPP) and to formally request that in 2010 SPP is paid monthly. As I

wrote this article no decision has yet been made.

There has been speculation in some quarters that the money used for SPP could fund on call allowance.

Following the decision of the Police Arbitration Tribunal (PAT) in summer 2009 that there should be a national on-call allowance, the Home Secretary wrote to the PNB Chair in September 2009 confirming his acceptance in principle of the findings of the PAT. However, he urged the PNB to discuss what it saw as the major difference between both Sides in the potential costings of such an allowance. The matter has been referred back to the PAT when both sides failed to reach an agreement.

In these times of increasing demands upon the police service and the reduction in officer numbers it is imperative that the issue of on-call and SPP is resolved in a timely and efficient manner mindful of the needs of the police service as a whole and also of the dedicated, hard working and loyal men and women who hold the office of constable.