

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE

Organisation of Public Events

CODE OF PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

This leaflet is issued as a Code of Practice in accordance with Section 56(4) of the Greater Manchester Act, 1981. It is intended as a guide to the organisers of processions and protest marches. It is hoped that the Code of Practice will assist in fostering co-operation between organisers and the Greater Manchester Police and help to ensure that events pass off successfully, safely and with the minimum of inconvenience to the public. Sections 11, 12 and 13 Public Order Act 1986 detail the law in relation to public processions.

It must be accepted that the police have a clear duty to preserve the peace. At the same time they are anxious to give every co-operation where events are conducted with due regard to the law.

ADVANCE NOTICE

Discussions between organisers and the police are desirable and meeting at as early a stage as possible can produce arrangements of great mutual benefit. Indeed the Public Order Act 1986, Section 11, demands that written notice be given of any proposal to hold a public procession.

The notice must specify the date when it is intended to hold the procession, the time when it is intended to start it, its proposed route, and the name and address of the person, or one of the persons, proposing to organise it.

The notice must be delivered to a police station in the police area in which it is proposed the procession will start not less than six clear days before the date when the procession is intended to be held, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

Any person organising a procession who fails to comply with these requirements, or to adhere to the details of time, date and given route will be guilty of an offence.

PROCESSIONS

In the case of processions, the route will be the subject of discussion but before it starts the organiser will be served with a written copy of the route to be followed. However it must be clearly understood that as the police have a duty to prevent breaches of the peace, they may on occasions have to direct a procession by another route. This can happen before the march starts or while it is in progress.

Generally processions should keep to the left or nearside of the roadway unless otherwise directed by the police. One vehicle may be allowed to head the procession and one to follow at the rear but vehicles in the body of the procession can cause danger and are not normally allowed.

While a march will not normally be allowed to stop en route, in appropriate circumstances arrangements can be made for small deputations to leave the march and hand in letters or petitions at particular premises whilst the march is progressing. Advance notice should be given of any such intention.

EMPLOYMENT OF STEWARDS

Stewards are essential in the organisation of any public event. However it must be emphasised that a steward acts as a private person and cannot acquire or be delegated police powers or authority, nor any immunity from the law.

ORGANISATION

When preparing for an event, organisers should determine how many stewards will be necessary and for what purpose they will be used. It is imperative that organisers retain control of their event. A definite chain of command should be established whereby stewards

are aware to whom they are responsible and can refer matters for decisions.

IDENTIFICATION

Stewards should be readily identifiable. Previous experience has shown that wearing lapel badges alone is not sufficient and that distinctive clothing is necessary. It is recommended that a distinctive shirt, jumper, coat or fluorescent waistcoat would be ideal and that such clothing be issued well in advance of the event.

POWERS

Stewards should be clearly instructed that they are acting as private persons. Their status does not confer any advantage in law nor allow them to act as police officers in any way and organisers should clearly understand that this leaflet does not confer any such authorities. It is vital that stewards refer, immediately, to police any matters which are likely to lead to breaches of the law or to public disorder and that they do not become involved themselves.

The carrying of a weapon in any public place without lawful authority or reasonable excuse is prohibited by law. This includes the possession of such a weapon as a deterrent. Stewards must not carry or have with or near them any such weapons.

Stewards should confine themselves to acting on the instructions given by members of the organisation committee or on directions or advice received from police.

Stewards should be aware that they may be committing an offence if they persist in following instructions given by the organisers which conflict with those given by the police.

The advantages of tact and good humour cannot be over emphasised as they can have the effect of defusing potentially difficult situations. People attending any event are likely to respond positively to organisers and their stewards who display the ability to control the event and guide the participants. The response is most likely to be achieved if stewards ensure that they give participants clear and accurate directions and advice. They can only do this if properly and fully briefed themselves.

Should more detailed advice be required it can be obtained from:

The Chief Superintendent
'Divisional Headquarters'

Signed _____ Dated _____ 20 _____