



Wed, Feb 7, 2007

## Sections

1. [The Irish Times](#)
2. [Breaking News](#)
3. [Sport](#)
4. [Business](#)
5. [Technology](#)
6. [Weather](#)
7. [In Focus](#)
8. [Archive Search](#)
9. [Births, Marriages, Deaths](#)

- [Editions](#)

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- [Technology](#)

[Next Day](#) 

Last Updated: 06/02/2007 13:12

## 'Too much' spent on NI Ombudsman

More than £42 million (€63 million) has been spent on running the North's Police Ombudsman, but so far just six officers being found guilty of criminal offences, it was revealed today.

An Ulster Unionist peer claimed the low levels of corruption found by Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan's staff proved that too much cash has been spent on the organisation.

Lord Maginnis, formerly Ken Maginnis MP, said: "It is totally over-resourced and possibly totally unnecessary. If we had someone with more judicial and investigative knowledge than the current Police Ombudsman we might do things a lot less painfully."

But a spokesman for Mrs O'Loan stressed that a major part of her work focused on investigating complaints and finding police innocent.

Lord Maginnis made his criticisms after receiving parliamentary details of the total cost since since the office was set up six years ago.

Northern Ireland Minister Lord Rooker confirmed the budget has risen from £5,815,000 in 2001/02 to an allocation of just under £8 million this year.

In total the Ombudsman's Office has received £42,461,000 to deal with allegations and run cases.

During this period it has handled around 19,000 complaints and, by the end of the last financial year referred 74 cases to the Public Prosecution Service.

But Lord Maginnis claimed the only relevant fact was the criminal conviction of six officers from all completed investigations, which he said was a cost of just over £7 million each.

This showed the police service in different a light compared to the damning details of RUC Special Branch collusion with loyalist paramilitaries contained in a devastating Ombudsman report published two weeks ago, he said.

**PA**

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TODAY



1-5 °C

TOMORROW



2-5 °C

FRIDAY



3-6 °C

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