

Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Feedback from Review and Planning Session 13th May

1. On 13th May 2013, the Panel held a review and planning session facilitated by Frontline Associates, which reviewed the Commission's first year of work, and identified areas for improvement and ways in which the Panel's scrutiny role might be developed.
2. The review focussed specifically on the following topics:
 - Review of the first six months: Precept and budget, Police and Crime Plan and the confirmatory hearing
 - Actions to improve
 - Relationships with community safety partnerships, crime and disorder scrutiny committees, health and wellbeing boards and other relevant bodies
 - Creating a proactive work programme
3. The session was discussion based and notes are attached as Appendix 1. The Panel may wish to use these notes as resource and frame of reference when planning the work programme for 2013-14 and individual pieces of work.
4. The facilitators summarised the outcome of the review and planning session in the following statement, which the Panel may wish to adopt as statement of intent for the next year's work. This could be included in the Panel's Annual Report:

'In conclusion, having reviewed our preparation for and activity around the PCC's first Precept, Budget and Plan and the Confirmatory Hearing, we agreed we want to be proactive, need timely information, must build partnerships and relationships, develop our critical friend role and gather evidence, whilst avoiding duplication and overload. We need to encourage the PCC to suggest themes for our work programme, look at the ideas from today, consider our statutory roles, be aware of our capacity, avoid duplication, undertake specific training and promote and publicise our

role. In these ways, we will be able to fulfil better our statutory responsibilities'

5. Members may wish to consider the following comments and suggestions arising from the session in relation to the Panel's 2012-13 work programme:

Precept and Budget, and Police and Crime Plan

- Pre-meetings and good preparation are vital to effective working, as they allow for pre-discussion, agreement of lines of inquiry, and reaching consensus
- Preparation is particularly important with regard to budget scrutiny – in-depth scrutiny of the budget and precept needs adequate and timely information (dependent on timing of Home Office information).
- The precept/budget scrutiny timetable needs to be set in advance, and the Panel needs to be involved as early as possible
- Members without previous experience of budget/precept scrutiny and police budgets may need training to participate confidently
- Pre-meetings for precept/budget and Police and Crime Plan scrutiny should be longer for the Panel to fully discuss and agree comments and approach
- Relationship between the precept/budget and the Plan should be given stronger focus this year
- Participation of Panel members in the stakeholder panel was effective for the confirmatory hearing, and it is generally useful for Panel members to be present at stakeholder consultations

Relationships with other bodies

- Publicise the Panel's scrutiny role
- Maintain relationships with other bodies without duplicating the Commissioner's role and activity
- 'Meet Your PCP' day
- Focus on maintaining relationships with 2 or 3 external bodies in the first instance, as keeping abreast of all potential contacts would invite overload

- Panel members can act as a channel of communication to and from local stakeholder bodies
- Councillor Panel members could take independent members with them when they attend meetings of Community Safety Partnerships and other bodies

General

- Increase collaboration, understanding and information sharing about priorities and issues in different parts of the Force area
- Specialisation could be introduced eg subgroups to consider specific aspects of the Plan ; or individual Panel members championing particular issues. This would utilise members' particular skills and experience

Proactive scrutiny work

- The Panel could develop its own priorities
- Clear criteria for selecting new pieces of work are essential
- Prioritise areas of work where the Panel can make a difference
- Ensure achievable targets and clarity about objectives and evidence
- Look for gaps which are not being addressed elsewhere
- Ask the Commissioner if there are areas of her work where the Panel's policy input would add value, and emphasise that involvement at an early stage of policy work enables the Panel to work most effectively
- Continue to build trust and confidence between Panel and Commissioner to develop the 'critical friend' role
- Proactive work items need a solid evidence base of statistics and qualitative information, and the means to access these. Access to national overview of good practice is also important
- Develop the Panel's critical friend role by setting up subgroups to cover the Commissioner's four key objectives
- Continue to develop a sense of collective responsibility, working strategically for the good of the police force area as a whole
- Suggestion for Panel priorities:
 - Allocation of community safety grants

- How the police on the ground communicate with communities
- How the Commissioner is conducting consultation, how she is using evidence form it, costs, and feedback mechanisms
- Domestic violence
- Violence against men
- Trafficking

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APPENDIX 1

Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Notes from the second development seminar

Monday 13 May 2013 at the Campus, Weston-super-Mare

Session 1. Review of the first six months

– Precept and budget, Police and Crime Plan, and the Confirmatory Hearing

What went well?

- Confirmatory Hearing (3 groups)
 - Appropriate and relevant information was shared that allowed the Panel to arrive at a decision with regard to the Confirmatory Hearing
 - Advance information was available for the Confirmatory Hearing
 - The candidate impressed at the Confirmatory Hearing
 - We were well prepared for the Confirmatory Hearing, including agreed lines of enquiry and questions after invaluable pre-discussion (2)
 - There was a good discussion before the Confirmatory Hearing
 - Individuals were asked for ideas for questions in advance of the Confirmatory Hearing
 - Publicity about the Confirmatory Hearing
 - No politicisation of the discussion regarding the Confirmatory Hearing

- Police and Crime Plan
 - Overall Plan and six localities approach is good for the PCC's Police and Crime Plan
 - The overall and six area plans worked well – it is a good format and ties down actions in individual areas
 - We were able to share experience in discussing the Plan
 - The stakeholder meeting was useful with Panel involvement and an opportunity for us to hear the stakeholder views with regard to the Police and Crime Plan
 - Effective communications and feedback, plus monitoring of the Police and Crime Plan

- The PCC took on some of the PCP's ideas for the Plan
- Positive feedback from our work on the Plan

What could have happened better?

- Financial support is not sufficient to support the work of the Panel
- Scrutiny of the Budget and Precept
 - We had virtually no input to budget scrutiny
 - It was all new and we didn't have enough time nor confidence (2)
 - It was too late for in-depth scrutiny of what was included, especially as figures were late from the Home Office
 - The PCC's manifesto effectively tied her hands
 - This also limited the PCP's role with one comment that the member felt manipulated or led and their hands tied (2)
 - A Chief Constable was not in post
 - The political nature of the discussions was unfamiliar to the independent members
 - We felt the pressure of the press presence during budget scrutiny
 - It felt like completing tick boxes and that we were expected to give our blessing to the budget and precept
 - It was too rushed and not properly discussed in groups
 - The precept and budget consultation was rushed, reducing confidence in the outturn
 - We should have considered the information and the PCC's decision more
 - We need to start the process earlier – the Panel needs to be involved at an earlier stage
 - We need more time to consider the impact of the Panel's decisions including using a pro forma to discuss them
 - We need to work differently with the PCC
 - We were well aware of the reduction in resources
 - We needed to have understood what constituted a majority and ensured that everyone could be present
 - Rules regarding the veto of the precept – a majority voted against but did not meet the two thirds requirement of membership rather than just attendance (2)
 - We needed training ahead of the Precept to understand police budgets

- We need to understand the difference between strategic and operational issues
- The Panel needs a whole session to discuss the Precept and Budget, and the Plan before meeting the PCC (longer than 30 minutes and with detailed information)
- Police and Crime Plan
 - We only saw the Plan when it was ready to go out, and had needed an earlier indication of what the Plan would be like
 - The connection between the Budget and Precept and the Police and Crime Plan needs to be clearer and stronger
 - District plans need to be available sooner – if needed by the Panel at all?
 - A benchmark has been set for future year comparisons with regard to the Plan
- Confirmatory Hearing
 - With regard to the Confirmatory Hearing, there was confusion of some members about the procedures eg the separate procedures for short-listing, interview and the role of HR, and the separate role of the Panel at the confirmatory hearing

What action could we take for the future?

- Increased communication and liaison across the Panel
- We need to consider the needs of the co-optees and the councillors who have not been on the Police Authorities
- We need to develop our critical friend role, including through task and finish groups (2)
- TFGs need not be expensive if proper links are maintained by PCP members
- Precept and Budget
 - Training in September on police budgets and scrutiny of the Precept and Budget
 - A timetable set in advance for budget scrutiny
 - Better planning for the Budget and Precept, subject to the timing of the Government announcement (2)
 - More advance notice of budget proposals
- Police and Crime Plan

- We need increased understanding of issues in different parts of the Avon and Somerset Force area
 - The Champion idea could be reintroduced ie people who could take a particular interest in issues, areas or abreast of the national agenda
 - Better collaboration to help us to understand local issues
 - Better links with partner organisations
 - A structure could be set up to listen to community leaders with regard to the Plan
 - Sub-groups could focus on particular priorities in the Plan
 - Evaluation is needed of the allocation of community safety grants
 - Maintain a close eye on complaints
- Confirmatory Hearing
 - Training on the procedures for HR recruitment and Confirmatory Hearings
 - Clarification of the respective roles

Other challenges

- Time available to the Panel and the number of meetings available to cover the business, plus the size of the Force area
- Understanding of the diverse area to ensure that it is reflected in the Plan and Budget
- Publicity to tell the public what the PCP's role is ie its scrutiny role
- The 'critical friend' role needs to be developed
- We need to continue to look at the Police and Crime Plan and the PCC's Budget and Precept
- In future we will be able to make comparisons with other years' budgets and Precept
- Political representation and the role of independents
- The Panel's budget is a challenge, limiting what we can do
- Ability to influence recruitment to reflect cultural contexts eg police on particular beats

Session 2. Collective contacts

The Panel members and officers considered the extent of existing contacts, and ones that could be developed. They included:

Local authority based structures such as

- Community Safety Partnerships
- Neighbourhood partnerships
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Strategic partnerships eg North Somerset Strategic Partnership
- Parish Councils
- Health and Wellbeing Boards through liaison with the Executive Member
- Voluntary organisations' umbrella bodies
- Clinical Commissioning Groups

Overview and scrutiny task groups such as

- Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- Health OSCs
- Wellbeing policy development groups
- Economy and communities policy development groups
- Resources scrutiny
- Education scrutiny
- Scrutiny TFG on the night time economy

Regional or sub-regional bodies such as

- South West England Adult Care Services Board
- Weston Health Trust Stakeholders
- People and Communities Board including Health and Wellbeing
- Voluntary Action North Somerset
- Black and minority ethnic organisations
- Ambulance services
- EDF and the developers of Hinckley Point

National structures such as

- the Local Government Association
- LGA Finance Panel, and similar on Welfare and Housing
- Media
- MPs and Ministers

Caution: we should not overload ourselves with contacts, but there could be a value in shadowing some of these meetings in order to gather evidence for our work

We might need to concentrate on two or three priorities and contacts eg local MPs, umbrella organisations of the voluntary sector and Health and Wellbeing Boards, depending on the PCC's priorities

PCP members need to be aware of the issues in organisations and feed into the Panel

We need to avoid duplication and make sure there is two way communications, so that councillors can feed information and ideas into the PCP – and report back at the local level

Suggestions were to organise a Meet your PCP day and to invite stakeholders to a PCP session on the PCC's annual report

Session 3. Prioritising pieces of work for a work programme

There was consensus that the criteria was helpful and valid
All were considered to be relevant but those that are particularly important are:

- Topic within scrutiny's remit
- Work currently underway
- Available statistical evidence
- Watching brief of new legislation

Criteria are useful to develop our work programme, and all are relevant, especially 3, 4, 6, 7 and 5.

Other key considerations included:

The PCP needs to make a difference

- It is important to have clarity about the respective roles
- It is important not to duplicate the Commissioner's role
- We need to ask the PCC if the PCP can help
- We need to ask the PCC is she has areas where our policy input would be useful

We could consider how we do our work, and how we are being resourced

- We must prioritise as a Panel
- We need an opportunity for the PCC to raise issues with the PCP to look at a matter at an early stage and to enable the PCP to be proactive
- We need to have influence as a critical friend, which requires trust and confidence between the PCC and the PCP
- We need evidence
- We need to have strategic priorities including gaps

- The PCC has four themes. We could delegate these for monitoring purposes to working groups of four people to act as the critical friend
- Specialisation would be possible within the Panel to utilise our skills and knowledge appropriately
- The Panel could divide into sub-groups, which each could look at one of the PCC's four key objectives and get information to do so
- We need more collaborative working
- We need to recognise collective responsibility, working for the good of the whole
- We need achievable targets
- We need to consider how we work to tackle priorities

We need to prioritise areas where the Panel can make a difference and set a few targets which are achievable

- We can have a watching brief of the national picture
- We could cover locality working and look at local priorities, reporting back to the Panel and the PCC
- We need to find out how the police on the ground communicate with communities
- New pieces of work could include how the PCC is conducting consultation, how she is using the evidence from it, what it is costing and how she is feeding back.
- Other suggestions included violence against men, ethnicity, trafficking and domestic violence
- We must know what the objective is and what information is needed
- We want to avoid duplication but draw on existing information as evidence and spot any gaps that it is felt are not being addressed elsewhere
- We need statistics and qualitative evidence and means to access them
- Panel members need to know where to source information
- Panel members could source information from Executive members in the constituent councils rather than duplicate requests for information
- Panel members could attend stakeholder meetings, advising them of their interest and role in advance

We need partnerships and national research to guide us

- An information sheet for Panel members could be produced on external bodies and their roles
- We could gather evidence to ensure that we have the knowledge to challenge the PCC, using a pro forma similar to that used in Suffolk with our partners

- We need to know who the members are of the CSPs and CDOSCs, where they are, how we make contact, and how we can avoid duplicating their work. If a councillor is doing their work properly, it was suggested, there may not need to be the involvement of the Panel as a whole
- We need to make contact with Community Safety Officers
- Councillor Panel members could take independent co-optees with them when visiting CSPs
- Panel members need to find out what the crime and disorder scrutiny committees are doing, where they exist
- There needs to be a balance between the PCC's priorities in urban and rural areas
- Health and Wellbeing Boards are very important – they cover a wide range of appropriate areas, so Panel members need to know how to access them and who to contact
- The priorities of these bodies are key – the Panel needs to check the PCC picks up on and incorporates them into her work and is consulting them

Possible topics include domestic violence, communications to the police, and the PCC's consultation – how used, what she does with it, how she feeds back to the Panel, the cost and its value for money

Any gaps

- We need to strengthen our contacts and awareness of priorities, and those of the PCP
- A challenge will be around communications in the Force, down to the lowest level eg PCSOs
- We need to be aware of who has a national overview of good practice eg in domestic violence, in order to have an evidence-based challenge
- We need to use the LGA Knowledge Hub or benchmarking against other Force areas

In conclusion, having reviewed our preparation for and activity around the PCC's first Precept, Budget and Plan and the Confirmatory Hearing, we agreed we want to be proactive, need timely information, must build partnerships and relationships, develop our critical friend role and gather evidence, whilst avoiding duplication and overload. We need to encourage the PCC to suggest themes for our work programme, look at the ideas from today, consider our statutory roles, be aware of our capacity, avoid duplication, undertake specific training and promote and

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