



Durham Police and Crime Panel

28 October 2014

Task & Finish Group Activity – Work Programme Development

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. To present findings and consider proposals to develop the Panel's work programme following work through 'task and finish' group activity.

Background

2. At its meeting on 24 June 2014, the Panel agreed to establish a task and finish group to look at further developing the Panel's work programme with activity to enhance constructive challenge to the PCC as its critical friend.
3. The Task & Finish Group consisting of Councillors Hovvels, Jones, Boyes and Brookes met on Thursday 4th September 2014. In gathering its evidence, the group gave consideration to:
 - The Centre for Public Scrutiny publication "PCPs one year on";
 - Home Affairs Select Committee Report: Police and Crime Commissioners: progress to date;
 - PCC's individual priorities at PCP meetings or through Task & Finish activity;
 - Research on approaches including review activity that has been taken by other PCPs that could be beneficial to Durham PCP;
 - Explore any training and development for the Panel; and
 - Suggestions from the Task & Finish Group.
4. Throughout discussion, the Task and Finish Group acknowledge the PCC was elected into office in November 2012 and to date has a professional and positive relationship with the Panel. The Group welcomed the PCC's openness to share information, develop protocols and engage the Panel in seminars and events relating to his priority areas. In addition, it is also noted that the Panel has been in operation for two years and it is timely to build upon these foundations. Findings from the Group's work are reported through the following headings:
 - Standard Agenda items

- Engagement with the public
- Task & Finish activity
- Communications
- Training & Development

Key Findings

Standard Agenda Items

5. The Police and Crime Panel hold five scheduled meetings throughout the municipal year and agenda items are generally linked to considering or receiving progress reports to the core responsibilities of the Panel within the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The Group welcome reports and presentations on topics outside these areas but feel that an agenda could be strengthened through consideration of the following areas as standard items at each Panel meeting.
6. ***Decisions by the PCC***
The Home Affairs Committee Report included a recommended that the Home Office brings forward proposals to amend the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specific Information) Order 2011 to require Commissioners to publish a forward plan of key decisions, where these are known in advance, and to publish background information on each decision when it is made. At the time of producing this report, a response to the Committee has not been published but the Task and Finish Group feel that a report to this nature would be beneficial for the Panel to consider at its meetings.
7. ***PCC's Commissioning Activity and Finance***
The Task and Finish Group welcome the approach by the Commissioner to provide a budget update to the Panel's October meeting but feel that the Panel should receive information at each meeting on commissioning activity of the PCC in relation to priority areas of the Police and Crime Plan.
8. In addition, the Panel's meeting in February of each year is scheduled to consider the PCC's proposed budget for the forthcoming year. The Group note the timeframe of grant allocations from the Government but request that at its meeting in December of each year, a report is presented to the Panel on the PCC's budget and precept consultation.
9. ***Police and Crime Plan Priorities***
The PCC's Police and Crime Plan presented to the Panel's meeting on 3rd March 2014 and identified the Commissioner's priority areas. In its response to the Plan, the Panel requested a specific report on activity to address hate crime and at its June meeting received a comprehensive presentation from Chief Supt. Graham Hall on activity of the Hate Crime Action Group. The presentation led to a constructive debate and was well received by the Panel. Within this context, the Task & Finish Group may wish to include an item on each Panel meeting relating to the PCC's priorities.

10. ***HMIC reports and Topical Issues***

The feedback report to appraise the Panel of recent HMIC inspections was welcomed by the Panel and feel that future reports following inspections would be beneficial. In relation to receiving information, the Task and Finish Group believe the Panel's agenda could be strengthened with an item on "Hot issues" with the aim to provide an opportunity to receive a report from the PCC on any "Hot Issues" to inform the Panel of the Durham Force area position in relation to national or important topical issues. It is acknowledged that due to sensitive nature and confidentiality this item may be categorised within Part B of the Agenda.

Engagement with the Public

11. Police and Crime Panel meetings are open to the public and to date there has been attendance by both members of the public and press. The CfPS report, 'PCPs one year on' calls for Panels to have greater visibility and representing the public voice. This reference includes use of social media and information on the Panel's website, but through undertaking research some Police and Crime Panels' meetings also include a public question time.
12. Within this context, the Panel's Terms of Reference includes a procedure for members of the public to ask questions with the Chairman's agreement. In addition, within its response to the PCC's Annual report in June 2014, the Panel acknowledged the PCC's approach to continuously engage with communities across the Force area through a variety of formats including attendance at meetings, use of social media and press/media releases. Information regarding the Panel, its Members and meeting details are available online but consideration could be given to use of social media to raise awareness of Panel meetings.

Task and Finish Activity

13. The Group acknowledge the benefit of undertaking task and finish group activity but feel this should only be undertaken when linked to a specific topic area to either develop the role of the Panel or add value or provide challenge linked to the PCC's priority areas.

Communications with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

14. The Group commented on the positive and professional relationship with the PCC and his Office and welcomed the approach by the PCC's office to share information on performance, community newsletters and events but in order to keep the Panel appraised of activity of the PCC, request that all press releases from the PCC to be circulated to Panel Members.

Training & Development

15. The Group commented that when the Panel was established, a number of training and development events were held to raise awareness of the Panel's roles and responsibilities, policing priorities and performance management. The Panel has also been invited to the PCC's seminars on hate crime, domestic abuse and drugs, Durham Constabulary's Problem Orientated

Policing conference and held a Restorative Approaches awareness session with Durham Constabulary in November 2013.

16. Prior to the meeting of the Task and Finish Group, the PCC's Office has offered to undertake training on Policing Governance, and Finance and an overview of Police Structure (operational). In considering this request by the PCC's Office, the benefit of previous training and development sessions and practices undertaken by other Panel areas, the Task and Finish Group feel consideration be given to hold two half day sessions throughout the year to focus on training and development. It is suggested these sessions be held in November and at the end of May, with the first session in November focussing training in relation to commissioning, finance and priority setting. The session to be held at the end of May could be focused on evaluating Panel activity of the previous year and developing a work programme for the forthcoming year.

Conclusion

17. The Task and Finish Group feel that this has been a timely and valuable exercise to build upon work undertaken to date by the Panel. In conclusion, this report identifies a number of recommendations to develop the Panel's work programme with activity to enhance constructive challenge to the PCC as its critical friend.
18. This report and these recommendations have been discussed with the PCC and his Office. He is supportive of all of them; their implementation should bring greater structure and clarity to the working relationship between the PCC and the Panel, and increase the effectiveness of the dialogue between the two. As always, he considers that these arrangements should be kept under review to ensure that we are looking for ways to continuously improve.

Recommendations

19. Members of the Police and Crime Panel are asked to agree:
 - i) Standard items on the Panel's agenda include reports on:
 - a. Decisions by the PCC;
 - b. Commissioning activity of the PCC in relation to priority areas of the Police and Crime Plan;
 - c. A presentation that focuses on an area on delivery of a priority area within the Police and Crime Plan; and
 - d. Feedback reports from HMIC inspections and topical issues
 - ii) That the Panel's meeting in December includes a report on the PCC's Budget and precept consultation.
 - iii) That the Office of the PCC include Members of the Police and Crime Panel within its circulation of all press releases from the Commissioner.
 - iv) That two half day panel training and development sessions are arranged throughout the municipal year.

Contact: Jonathan Slee, Overview and Scrutiny Officer Tel: 03000 268142
Jonathan.slee@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing – None

Risk – None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – None

Accommodation – None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement – None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications – None.