

Police and Crime Panel

4 December 2014

Role of Joint Chief Finance Officer – Safeguards Protocol

Report of the Chief of Staff and Head of Internal Audit



Purpose of the Report

1. To report to the Police and Crime Panel about the work carried out by Internal Audit and the OPCC in relation to the role of Joint Chief Finance Officer.

Background

2. A request was made from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to Durham County Council's Internal Audit Service in April 2014 for an independent assurance review and report that considered the current arrangement whereby the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) Role for both the PCC and Chief Constable (CC) is fulfilled by the same individual.
3. The review consisted of a series of interviews with key individuals involved in the process in conjunction with a review of associated documents and protocols, and considered the following risks:
 - The day to day working arrangements are ineffective;
 - The PCC or the CC does not receive independent advice;
 - Disputes which arise between the PCC and CC are unresolved.
4. The report considered that a strong working relationship and position of mutual trust and understanding exists between the PCC and CC and this is well supported by the Chief Finance Officer. Openness, transparency and an agreed focus in prioritising the resources of the Force were key drivers that underpin this relationship.
5. The report affirmed that there are clear financial and operational benefits in continuing the arrangement in the immediate future, primarily linked to effective decision making. In confirming the effectiveness of the arrangement, reference was made to the importance of the relationship between the PCC, CC and by extension the Chief Finance Officer. In recognition of this, the report stated that should the dynamic of this key tripartite change, or relationships between them deteriorate, the continuation of the arrangement would need to be evaluated again.

Current Position

6. The report was presented to the Joint Audit Committee at its meeting on 15th July 2014 and, after consideration of the report, the Committee requested that:
 - a) **a formal protocol be drafted** and put in place to draw all of the safeguards together; and
 - b) they be consulted on the content of that protocol.

7. The draft protocol was produced by Internal Audit and the OPCC. It was considered on 16th September and finally approved on 18th November.
8. The protocol is attached. The OPCC intend to publish it following consideration by the Police and Crime Panel.

Recommendation

9. That the Police and Crime Panel notes the work carried out, and the content of the protocol, and offers any comments in advance of publication.

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HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT

ALAN REISS
CHIEF OF STAFF, OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Appendix 1: Risks and Implications

Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report, although internal audit aim through our broad programme of work to report whether there are safe and efficient arrangements in place for the proper administration of financial affairs.

Staffing

None

Equality and Diversity

None

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Children's Act 2004

None

Stakeholder/Community Engagement

None

Environment

None

Collaboration and Partnerships

None

Value for Money and Productivity

Ongoing revenue saving to the Police and Crime Commissioner and Constabulary as a result of the Chief Finance Officer role for both the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable being fulfilled by the same individual.

Potential Impact on Police and Crime Plan Priorities

None

Commissioning

None

Other risks

None

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