

Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel Independent Co-optees

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in becoming an Independent Co-opted member of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel. The Panel will be part of the new governance and accountability arrangements for policing in the Thames Valley. The Panel's role will be to maintain a regular check and balance on the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner (to be elected on 15 November 2012).

The Panel is looking for two committed and energetic people to serve as Independent co-optees from autumn 2012 for a four year term. This is an exciting opportunity to be involved from the start of new and very different arrangements for reducing crime and disorder.

The role offers an opportunity to:

- Support the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in their role in helping tackle crime and disorder.
- Support public accountability and transparency through the work of the Panel
- Gain experience working with a wide range of stakeholders – senior councillors from different local authorities as well as the PCC and Police.
- Gain a strategic understanding of policing and community safety.
- Experience working on a committee and effective scrutiny.

This is an important and high profile role. As a new role the exact time commitment is not known, but expected to be on average one day a month, including preparation time and travel. Meetings will be held at varying locations throughout the Thames Valley (in the historic county areas of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire). All Panel members will receive induction and other appropriate training as needed. Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses will be paid.

The closing date for applications is **Friday 13 July**, after which the local authority Panel members will consider and assess all applications received.

It is expected that shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview in early September 2012 and that co-optees would take up office from mid-October 2012 onwards.

The Panel wishes to reflect the breadth of communities in the Thames Valley and welcomes applications from all eligible people – irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (ie gender), sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.

If you wish to discuss any aspect in more detail please contact Clare Gray,
Buckinghamshire County Council, on 01296 383610 or cgray@buckscc.gov.uk

Background

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 introduces significant changes in police governance and accountability, in particular replacing the Police Authorities by directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

In summary, the public accountability for the delivery and performance of the police service within each force area is placed into the hands of the PCC on behalf of their electorate. The PCC draws on their mandate to set and shape the strategic objectives of their force area in consultation with the Chief Constable. They are accountable to the electorate; the Chief Constable is accountable to their PCC. The Police and Crime Panel (the Panel) within each force area is empowered to maintain a regular check and balance on the performance of the PCC in that context.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

The PCC within each force area has a statutory duty and electoral mandate to hold the police to account on behalf of the public.

The PCC is the recipient of all funding related to policing and crime reduction. How this money is allocated is a matter for the PCC, with advice and recommendations from the Chief Constable.

In addition to setting the budget, the PCC will set the strategic direction and objectives of the force through their Police and Crime Plan. They will hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance of the force's officers and staff, and will have powers to appoint and remove the Chief Constable.

The first PCCs will be elected on 15 November 2012, take office seven days later (on 22 November 2012) and serve at least until the next election in May 2016; thereafter PCCs will normally hold office for four years.

The Police and Crime Panel (the Panel)

The Panel provides checks and balances on the work of the PCC. The Panel does not scrutinise the Thames Valley Police; it scrutinises the PCC's exercise of their statutory responsibilities. While the Panel is there to constructively challenge the PCC, it also has a key role in supporting the Commissioner in their role in enhancing public accountability of the Police Force.

The key functions of the Panel include:

- Review and make recommendations on the draft Police and Crime Plan
- Scrutinise the PCC, inviting the Chief Constable to attend before the PCP where appropriate
- Review the PCC's appointment of Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy PCC where one is appointed.
- Make reports and recommendations on matters relating to the PCC.

- Monitor all complaints against the PCC and the informal resolution of such complaints where necessary.
- Question the PCC on the annual report in a public meeting.
- Veto powers on the PCC's proposed annual council tax precept and appointment of Chief Constable.

In the Thames Valley an agreement has been reached across all 18 principle authorities on how the Panel will operate. This agreement is set out in a 'Panel Arrangements Document'. The Agreement covers the following local authority areas:

- Aylesbury Vale District Council
- Bracknell Forest Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Cherwell District Council
- Chiltern District Council
- Milton Keynes Council
- Oxford City Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Slough Borough Council
- South Bucks District Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- West Berkshire Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council
- Wokingham Borough Council
- Wycombe District Council

The Panel will be made up of one elected member from each of the 18 local authorities, together with two independent co-opted members. Buckinghamshire County Council is the host local authority for the Panel and, within the overall budget agreed, will provide administrative and other support to the Panel and its members.

The first formal meeting of the Panel will take place in July 2012. Further information about the Panel, including a copy of the Panel Arrangement Agreement, can be found at: www.buckscc.gov.uk/scrutiny

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply to be an Independent Co-optee on the Panel member you must:

- Be over the age of 18
- Have your principal residence and/or principal place of work within the Thames Valley Police Force Area, and must have done so for at least 12 months prior to appointment
- If employed, you should check with your employer that your terms of employment do not prohibit them from membership of the Panel.

In addition, those holding the following roles are restricted from application:

- the PCC for the police area;
- a member of staff of the Police and Crime PCC for the area;
- a member of the civilian staff of the Police Force for the area;
- a Member of Parliament;
- a Member of the National Assembly for Wales;
- a Member of the Scottish Parliament;
- a Member of the European Parliament;
- a member of the uniformed Police Force for the area;
- a member of a principal council within the Thames Valley Police Force area.¹

¹ http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/overview_scrutiny/FinalPanelArrangements.pdf

Person Specification

This is a voluntary role and no specific professional knowledge or experience is required. Applicants might have a professional background in an area such as community safety, criminal justice or victim support. Alternatively, a strong track record of community work or business skills would be just as valuable. An interest in policing/community safety issues is expected.

Candidates will be assessed against the following competencies and personal qualities.

Competencies:

- **The ability to think strategically:** To have breadth of vision, to rise above detail, and to see problems and issues from a wider, forward-looking perspective and to make appropriate linkages.
- **The ability to make good judgements:** To take a balanced, open-minded and objective approach, for example, in evaluating the priorities of the Police and Crime Commissioner, assessing candidates for top level appointments or considering complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- **The ability to challenge:** To be able to rigorously scrutinise and challenge constructively without becoming confrontational, using appropriate data, evidence and resources.
- **The ability to be analytical:** To interpret and question complex written material, including financial and statistical information and other data such as performance measures and identify the salient points.
- **The ability to communicate effectively:** To be able to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing – and to interact positively with other members of the Panel, the PCC and the public.

The following personal qualities are also important:

- **Team working** The ability to play an effective role in meetings through listening, persuading and showing respect for the views of others.
- **Self-confidence** The skill to challenge accepted views constructively without becoming confrontational.
- **Enthusiasm and drive** The ability to be proactive in seeking out learning and developmental opportunities to enhance knowledge and understanding (for example, on financial matters and statutory requirements).
- **Respect for others** The capacity to treat all people fairly and with respect, to value diversity and respond sensitively to difference.
- **Integrity** The necessity to embrace high standards of conduct and ethics and be committed to upholding human rights and equality of opportunity for all.

Other Requirements and Considerations

- Candidates must be able to attend meetings at varying locations throughout the Thames Valley area at least six times a year, as well as attend any appropriate training sessions.
- Candidates should have the time, energy and commitment to prepare for and attend regular meetings. We suggest that they would need to allocate around one day per month to devote to this role.
- Candidates should have a willingness to learn
- **Note:** Candidates must be eligible for the role (*see eligibility criteria*).

Roles and Responsibilities

All Independent Co-optees are full voting members and will have access to the same level of support and information as elected members on the Panel. The core role of both elected members and independent co-optees on the Panel is to:

- Scrutinise the work of the PCC to ensure that the PCC is discharging its functions effectively
- Bring any specialist knowledge, skills, experience and expertise they may have to the scrutiny work of the Panel.
- Ensure that there is an effective independent challenge to the PCC and that this challenge is constructive to support the PCC in carrying out their role.

Responsibilities

A co-opted member of the Police and Crime Panel is expected to:

- Attend all formal meetings of the Panel (approx. 6 per year)
- Establish good relations with other members, officers and co-optees.
- Attend additional meetings e.g. working groups or evidence gathering sessions as required.
- Prepare for each meeting by reading the agenda papers and additional information to familiarise yourself with the issues to be covered during the meeting. Prior to the meeting consider the questions you may wish to put to the Police and Crime Commissioner and other expert witnesses.
- At the meetings you will need to listen carefully, ask questions in a way which is non-judgmental, respect confidentiality and help the Panel to make practical suggestions for improvements in services.
- Assist in the preparation of reports and the formulation of recommendations; this may involve volunteering to participate in a Task Group to conduct a scrutiny review.
- Attend training and development events as needed.
- Abide by the Panel Arrangements and Rules of Procedure which set out how the Police and Crime Panel will operate in the Thames Valley area.
- Keep abreast of the key issues in relation to the responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the priorities within the Police and Crime Plan.
- Contribute to achieving an open, accountable and transparent decision-making process in relation to policing and community safety issues in the Thames Valley area.

Co-optees will be expected to adhere to the Member Code of Conduct of the Host Authority for the Panel, Buckinghamshire County Council. The Code can be found in section 5.1 of Buckinghamshire County Council's constitution, available at:

http://www.bucksc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/constitution/constitution_constitution.pdf