

Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Communications Strategy

(Draft – June 2012)

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this communications strategy is to help raise the overall profile of the new Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel to all relevant parties and to help ensure that its role and remit is made clear to all relevant stakeholders and public.

This is a completely new way of working which will need to be explained – Why it is happening? How it will work? What is the aim of the changes? What impact will it have on the different audiences?

2. Background

In September 2011 the Coalition Government passed the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act. As part of the new legislation the 43 Police Authorities throughout England and Wales will be replaced by a local directly-elected Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). Each Commissioner will hold the Chief Constable of their region to account for the service delivered by the police force.

In addition, a Police and Crime Panel (PCP) will be set up in each region: *“Police and Crime Panels are being introduced in every force area to scrutinise the actions and decisions of Police and Crime Commissioners. Panels will support and challenge the Commissioners in the exercise of their functions, acting as a critical friend.”* – Home Office statement.

The changes are being brought about as part of the Government’s crime and policing reforms. The overall aim is to decentralise control and improve the democratic accountability of the police service to the public.

The new Commissioner will be elected by public ballot in November 2012. The Police and Crime Panel will be in place before this date so that it will be ready to start work as soon as the Commissioner is in post.

The Commissioner’s role will include:

- Publishing a five year Police and Crime Plan
- Setting out the local police and crime objectives
- Setting the local precept and annual force budget

The panel will have a scrutiny function and will have no direct executive powers.

The panel's tasks will include:

- Reviewing the draft Police and Crime Plan in terms of key priorities
- Overseeing complaints against the Commissioner
- Assessing the budget allocation for policing activities.

Within the Thames Valley region, covering Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes, responsibility for setting up the Police and Crime Panel falls to the 18 local authorities in the area. Buckinghamshire County Council has taken position as the host authority, providing the secretariat support for the Panel.

The Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel will have one councillor from each of the 18 local authorities and two independent co-opted members.

3. Situational analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good existing working relationships with the Community Safety Partnerships and most other key interest groups. 2. Good working relations within the 18 authorities, agreement already in place for structure. 3. Each individual authority will bring different strengths and skills to the Panel. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potential for difficulties in working with a large number of partner organisations for the first time. 2. Exact role of Panel is not yet clearly defined and will develop over time. 3. With so many local authorities involved, will need to ensure consistency in core messages and co-ordination. 4. Limited resources – only one full time member of staff and finite budget. 5. New way of working – it will take time to bed down
<p>Opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The changes are happening nationwide so there will be lots of general publicity helping to promote the new set up and raising overall awareness. 	<p>Threats</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Managing expectations – if the profile of the Panel is raised too much it may raise expectations on what the Panel can actually deliver.

<p>2. This is a completely new way of working – the new Commissioner will replace the 19 member Police Authority – it may be easier to deal with/build up a working relationship with one person as opposed to a whole committee.</p>	<p>2. Equally, if the Panel does not gain a high enough public profile it may lack power and influence.</p> <p>3. There are currently 17 Community Safety Partnerships in the Thames Valley Region. There will be a challenge involved in how the work of these groups fits in around the new set up.</p> <p>4. Large number of authorities involved, will need to ensure comms messages are consistent and united.</p>
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4. Communications Objectives

- a. To raise awareness of the new position of Police and Crime Commissioner and the new governance structures, specifically the Police and Crime Panel, it's functions, aims and limitations, to all relevant audiences to manage expectations. Also explaining and clarifying the Panel's relationship to the Commissioner.
- b. To raise the overall profile of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel with both key stakeholders and interested members of the general population within the region.
- c. Engaging with the public for them to get involved with shaping the work of the Panel and supporting the public involvement strategies of the Police Force and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

5. Target audiences/stakeholders

- a. Commissioner
- b. General public
- c. Community Safety Partnerships

- d. Other external partners, including Victim Support, Neighbourhood Watch groups, crime forums, community groups/residents associations, probation services etc
- e. Councils – All Members and staff in each of the 18 local authorities
- f. Thames Valley Police Force
- g. Media – across the whole Thames Valley region – (Influencers)

6. Key messages

These will be refined by the Panel over time but will include the following:

- a. General public – Initial promotion and request for applications for co-opted member positions, explanation of the Panel and its role in relation to the Commissioner, why it is being set up, what it means for residents, how they can contact the Panel/get involved, how this new way of working benefits them.
- b. External partners – Explanation of the Panel and why it is being set up, what impact it will have for partners, how the Panel will work and how it will fit in with their own work
- c. Councils - (particularly Cabinet & Scrutiny) & relevant staff (heads of service etc) – Introducing new set up, what it means for each council, role of the elected member within the Panel
- d. Police – How we can work together with you to support the Commissioner and help communicate key messages
- e. Media – Overall promotion of the Panel, why it is being set up, how it will work, who is involved/key contacts, what it means for the Thames Valley region
- f. Commissioner – The Panel is there to support the Commissioner in their work, as a ‘critical friend’ but also to hold them to account.

7. Timeline (Phasing)

The communications plan will have two phases:

- a. Phase 1 – Pre-election of Commissioner – June to November
- b. Phase 2 – Post-election of Commissioner – November onwards (with input from Panel members on key messages going forward).

Phase 1 - Focus will be on:

- The setting up process, including appointment of the two co-opted members and new Scrutiny Officer
- Establishing the general role and workings of the Panel
- General awareness-raising with internal stakeholders and key partners

Phase 2 – Focus will be on:

- Further awareness-raising to wider publics and interest groups – emphasising their ability to influence the agenda/raise issues
- Explaining the exact role and remit of the Panel
- Promoting key forthcoming priorities

8. Action Plan – Phase 1 – Pre-election of Commissioner – June to November

Audience	Message	Communications Method
Councils - relevant staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness raising – what the changes are 	Delivery methods up to each Council, suggested methods are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intranet Heads of Service briefings Staff magazines Intranet
Councils - Members	As above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter to members Cabinet member briefings All member briefings Scrutiny Committee briefing Member newsletters Intranet
External - Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for applications for two co-opted Panel members Appointment of new co-opted members Appointment of new Chairman First meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Press releases Q&As Press webinar?
External Partners – Community Safety Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background info How we can work together Who key contacts are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written briefings CSP newsletters/websites
Other external partners/ interest grps	As above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media stories Info in parish newsletters & websites Panel member websites Relevant partner/interest group newsletters/websites
Thames Valley Police Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How we can work together to support the Commissioner Key contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefings Newsletters/e-newsletters
General public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-emphasis of new set up and role of Panel, including 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media stories Info in parish newsletters & websites

	<p>how it relates to the Commissioner role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key forthcoming priorities• How the public can get involved with the work of the Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Localities newsletters• Panel member websites• Twitter/Facebook/YouTube
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Phase 2 – Post election of Commissioner – November onwards

Audience	Message	Communications Method
Councils- relevant staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further background details on Panel • Forthcoming developments 	Delivery methods up to each Council, suggested methods are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intranet • Heads of Service briefings • Staff magazines
Councils - Members	As above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updates to full council, cabinet members and Overview & Scrutiny Committees • Member newsletters • Member zones on Intranet
External -Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner elections/results – Panel looking forward to working with new appointee • Communicating Panel's forthcoming priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Press release
External Partners – Community Safety Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forthcoming priorities of Panel • How they can get involved & feed in their views on the Commissioner's Plan, priorities, budget and proposed precept level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Conference (all)
Other external partners/ interest grps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forthcoming priorities of Panel • How they can get involved and feed in their views 	
Commissioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways we can work together, support your work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters • Media • Website updates
Thames Valley Police force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forthcoming priorities of Panel • Re-emphasising ways we can 	

	work together	
General public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forthcoming priorities of Panel • How they can get involved/comment/feed in views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press articles • Info in parish magazines • Panel member websites • Webcasting of meetings?

9. Evaluation

We need to be able to measure the impact of this communications strategy. Have the objectives been met –

- Are people aware of the changes that have taken place and what it means for them/their organisation/local area?
- Are the target audiences aware of the Panel's existence, role and limitations? Do they understand what the role of the Panel is in relation to the Commissioner?
- How far are the public involved in engaging with the Panel?

Tools/Methods

- Media coverage
- Webpage/website hits
- Social media comments/tweets
- Enquiries generated