

Title: Developing a Work Programme

Date: 19 July 2012

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Purpose of Report

To provide an overview of the issues involved in developing a work programme to ensure that the Panel can scrutinise effectively.

Context

1. The Police and Crime Panel is a new entity. To be successful in holding the Police and Crime Commissioner to account and adding value the Panel's work programme (including meeting dates) will need to be developed to achieve this.
2. The Panel Arrangements document set out a commitment that the Panel would hold 'at least six ordinary meetings' per year. In addition to 'ordinary meetings' the Panel will need to hold extraordinary meetings for confirmation hearings for senior appointments of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
3. Police and Crime Panels are defined in legislation as a Joint Council Committee and its formal meetings will thereby normally be held in public. It is envisaged that formal committee meetings would on the whole operate in a similar manner to Parliamentary select committees as their function would be to hold the Police and Crime Commissioner to account through questioning he/she on their role.
4. Further Home Office regulations are awaited which will set out legal requirements in regard to the number of meetings needed for the Panel to use its veto powers. This will impact on the number and timing of Panel meetings, particularly in January/February.

Issues to consider

5. The Panel's work programme will to a large extent depend on what the Panel wants to achieve. The key issues that the Panel will need to consider in agreeing its work programme are set out below:
 - a) **Meeting legal requirements**—Further regulations are expected on the detail of the Panel's veto powers. It is anticipated that timescales will be laid out on when and how the Panel should consider whether to use its veto power on the PCC's proposed precept level. How will the Panel take into account its legal responsibilities in planning its meeting schedule?
 - b) **Pro-active scrutiny**—The Panel has a role in supporting the PCC. One way to do this would be to help the PCC with policy development and delivery through commissioning in-depth scrutiny reviews by a Task Group. How and when will the Panel set-up Task Groups?

- c) **Set-piece meetings**—The Panel has a number of legal requirements to meet, including holding set-piece meetings during the year. For example, consideration of the PCC’s annual report and confirmation hearings. The Panel could choose to decide to use these meetings as opportunities to assist with Task Group investigations or draw out key issues of public interest. How will the Panel ensure that set-piece meetings are useful rather than just meeting legal responsibilities?
- d) **Informal planning meetings**—Given that the Panel comprises 20 members, the Panel will need to consider how it can be effective in questioning the PCC at its public sessions. Should the session be an open forum for members to raise any issues with the PCC? How will the PCC, and others, be able to prepare to answer the Panel’s questions effectively without notice of the issues/topics? Does the Panel want to agree lines of questioning/topics in advance to provide a focus to the session? If so, will the Panel have regular private planning meetings?
- e) **Briefings**—The Thames Valley is diverse and large. For members to question the PCC and others effectively in public session; as well as conduct effective scrutiny reviews members will need to be informed and updated regularly. The time constraints mean it is unlikely for briefings and updates to be possible at Panel evidence sessions. How will the Panel therefore collectively receive oral briefings on key issues?
- f) **Time commitment**—The size of the Thames Valley means that inevitably some members will have to travel considerable distances to attend meetings. How can travel time for members be minimised? Would Task Groups with a smaller number of members help with this? Could briefings and formal meetings be arranged on the same day to reduce travel time?
- g) **Meeting venues**—The principle of rotating meetings venues across the Thames Valley has previously been agreed, with the cost of refreshments met by that Authority. For some meetings, possibly informal ones, the Panel might consider using some venues that are in a central location in the Thames Valley to minimise travel, or investigate the possibility of utilizing the Police Force Headquarters.
- h) **Timing of Meetings**—The Panel will need to decide whether to normally hold day or evening meetings. And, whether to attempt to have a regular day of the week to schedule meetings. The issues to consider in relation to this are: Will the Panel be able to scrutinise the Police and Crime Plan and budget in the space of time of an evening meeting? Given that meeting venues will be rotated, are members content with travelling long distances late in the evening? When will the Panel receive briefings or have pre-meeting to discuss lines of questioning? Does the Panel need to have flexibility to extend its meeting length if urgent business arises (for example the need for Confirmation Hearings)?

Preparation

6. At the Induction event held on 28 June, attendees discussed that for the Panel to operate effectively it would be important for all Panel members to collectively have a shared understanding of key policing and community safety issues. It was also discussed that having effective working practices in ensure that the Panel can operate as an effective scrutiny body would be important.

7. Prior to the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner it is suggested that the Panel prepares protocols for its working practices in relation to the following:
 - a) **Complaints Procedure (complaints against the PCC)**
 - b) **Memorandum of Understanding with the PCC**
 - c) **Public Involvement Strategy and Communications Protocols (between Councils/Police Force and PCC)**
 - d) **Relationship between the Panel and local crime & disorder scrutiny committees**

8. In addition, it is suggested that an Induction Programme for the Panel includes the following type of issues:
 - Overview of Thames Valley crime profile (including diversity of different areas)
 - Policing performance
 - Policing budgetary issues
 - Policing structures
 - Operational issues
 - Overview of Community Safety Partnerships
 - Crime and Disorder Strategic Assessments
 - Community Safety performance
 - Community Safety budgetary issues
 - Police and Crime Plan development
 - Best practice in scrutinising via public evidence sessions (Questioning Skills)
 - Budget Scrutiny practice
 - Conducting Scrutiny Reviews

Future Panel Meetings

9. Given the issues identified above, and awaited regulations, it is suggested that decisions on the future schedule of meetings for the Panel are taken in September/October after further detailed consideration of the issues above. Below is a proposed schedule for meetings for all Panel members in the Autumn.

Provisional Dates	Activity	Details
Pre-election of PCC		
Friday 14 Sept 2012 9.30-4.30 pm, venue tbc	Formal Panel meeting meeting/Informal Planning meeting (working practices)	Ratification of co-optees Work Programme Working Practices (Confirmation Hearings/Veto/Public Involvement)
Tues 25 Sept 2012 9.30-4.30 pm, Kidlington	Policing Familiarisation Day	Strategic Policing Requirement Police and Crime Plan Control Room Visit
Friday 5 Oct 2012 9.30-4.30 pm, venue tbc	Informal Panel Briefing – Community Safety & Scrutiny Skills	CSPs Briefings from probation; victim support Questioning skills
Sept/October	Optional Visits	House of Commons Select Committees/London Assembly
Friday 2 Nov 2012 9.30-4.30 pm	Informal Panel Briefing	Development of Police and Crime Plan (PA & Force) Financial Briefing
Friday 30 Nov 2012 9.30-4.30 pm	Stakeholder Conference (with new PCC) or first meeting of the Panel?	Raise understanding of the Panel; how partners can get involved.

Recommendations

- 1. To consider the preparation work schedule above and agree meeting dates.**
- 2. To consider whether Panel members wish to volunteer to help develop draft protocols in relation to:**
 - a) Complaints Procedure (complaints against the PCC)**
 - b) Memorandum of Understanding with the PCC**
 - c) Public Involvement Strategy and Communications Protocols (between Councils/Police Force and PCC)**
 - d) Panel and local scrutiny committees Protocol**

It is suggested that one member (In addition to the Chairman/Vice-Chairman) per topic area above could oversee the development of draft protocols by officers. The final protocols would be agreed by the Panel at a formal meeting (as well as partners as appropriate).

- 3. To consider meeting venues and give delegated authority to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to agree meeting venues for the dates identified above.**