

Minutes

Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Thursday 19 July 2012, in Kennet Room, Reading Borough Council, Civic Centre, Reading RG1 7AE, commencing at 5.00 pm and concluding at 7.25 pm.

Members Present

Councillor Dominic Boeck (West Berkshire Council), Councillor Mark Booty (West Oxfordshire District Council), Noel Brown (Chiltern District Council), David Carroll (Wycombe District Council), Trevor Egleton (Buckinghamshire County Council), Councillor Peter Geary (Milton Keynes Council), Councillor Jesse Grey (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), Councillor Bill Jones (Vale of White Horse District Council), Councillor Kieron Mallon (Oxfordshire County Council), Councillor Iain McCracken (Bracknell Forest Council), Councillor Tony Page (Reading Borough Council), Cllr Barrie Patman (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor Pam Pearce (Aylesbury Vale District Council), Councillor Bill Service (South Oxfordshire District Council) and Cllr Dee Sinclair (Oxford City Council)

Officers Present

Reece Bowman, Olwen Dutton (Bevan Britten), Clare Gray, Sara Turnbull and Susie Yapp (BCC)

Apologies

Councillor Anita Cranmer (South Buckinghamshire District Council), Councillor George Reynolds (Cherwell District Council) and Councillor Mohammed Sharif (Slough Borough Council)

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED

That Mr T Egleton be elected Chairman of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel for the ensuing year.

(Proposed by Mr D Carroll and seconded by Mr N Brown)

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED

That Mr K Mallon be elected Vice-Chairman of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel for the ensuing year.

(Proposed by Mr T Egleton and seconded by Mr N Brown).

3. Declarations of Interest

Mr B Jones declared a non-pecuniary interest as he received his pension from the Thames Valley Police.

4. Rules of Procedure

Olwen Dutton, Partner, Bevan Brittan (Independent Legal Adviser) presented the report. The rules of procedure have been debated extensively. This was the first year of the Panel and working practices needed to be established in the first instance. However, rather than making lots of ad-hoc changes it would be advisable to make one comprehensive change at the Annual Meeting next year.

The following points were discussed in detail:-

- Three hours was a useful indication of how long the meeting should take.
- The Steering Group had been keen to find a procedure for public participation. The Panel and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had differing roles and it was important to establish good communication channels to the PCC and the Panel; making it clear where specific issues should be raised.
- In terms of Sub-Committees, meetings would be held in the normal way, including voting arrangements.
- If an issue arose, which had not been included in the Rules of Procedure, then the practical way to approach this was adopting the Standing Orders of the Host Authority.
- A Member expressed concern about Minority Reporting. Olwen Dutton stated that reports would be prepared in the normal way of a scrutiny review and Panel Members would be made aware of any significant matters. If a Member wished to submit a Minority Report they should notify the Chairman, Scrutiny Officer and Democratic Services. The Member asked for information in advance in order for there to be time to submit a report. The Chairman reported that the Task and Finish Group reports are prepared in advance and circulated to all Members beforehand. The Scrutiny Manager reported that in her experience a Minority Report had not been required and would indicate a failure of the democratic process. Emphasis should be made of the Panel working together and reaching consensus otherwise this could affect their influence on the PCC. Olwen Dutton referred them to 11.5 of the rules which referred to reaching consensus rather than a formal vote.
- In terms of the budget the Joint Committee had discussed this and the Home Office funding. It was up to the Panel how to use this funding. The Work Programme would need to be agreed by the Panel and items prioritised. Workloads would be shared with Task and Finish Groups.
- A Member commented that it was important at an early point to sit down with the PCC in a non-adversarial way and discuss areas of work that would be mutually beneficial. The PCC would have resources transferred from the Police Authority but the scrutiny role was rather less resourced. Working in partnership was key.
- A Member asked if the Task and Finish Groups would be proportional and include the Minority Party. The Chairman reassured Members that the Groups would include volunteers of any political party. The wider and more difficult issue is how the Panel deals with different types of Authority and different areas as a whole and how this is balanced representatively.
- A Panel Member who had been a previous Police Authority Member commented that it was important to be pragmatic. The Government could impose changes at the last minute and there could be a need to produce reports in a short timescale. It was important that Members used their own Authorities resources as much as possible.
- A Member queried the voting procedures on vetoing the proposed precept – paragraph 16.2. The draft rules had included the wording in the regulations which were slightly confusing. The veto would need to be passed by at least two thirds of voting Members. The Scrutiny Manager reported that further regulations were expected which could amend the veto arrangements.

RESOLVED

- 1 That the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel agrees the proposed Rules of Procedure as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.**
- 2 That the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel agrees to review the proposed Rules of Procedure in light of any further regulations and development of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Police and Crime Commissioner.**

5. Independent Co-optees Appointment

Sara Turnbull, Scrutiny Manager introduced the report and also Reece Bowman the full time Scrutiny Officer newly appointed to support the Panel.

34 applications had been received for the post of Independent Co-optees. The immediate view of the candidates was that they were of a high calibre. She thanked the Authorities for their work in advertising and promoting the position of Independent Co-optee, and their Communication Teams.

The Scrutiny Manager commented on setting up a Sub-Group to shortlist and interview and the following points were made:-

- Shortlisting could be carried out electronically. Members could score each candidate then compare scoring at a Sub-Group Meeting so that it was transparent.
- A Member expressed concern that the applications were unrepresentative of the area and commented that there were not many applications from ethnic minorities, young people and women. This could possibly be linked to the fact that these positions were not remunerated. He suggested that it would be helpful to have a copy of the monitoring forms to see how representative the applicants were. In response Olwen Dutton reported that the Joint Committee had agreed that Members should encourage applicants who were representative of the whole community. Authorities had taken steps to promote the opportunity to all communities. Whilst it was important to encourage applicants from under-represented groups Members by law should appoint on merit. This was why the monitoring sheet had been removed. A Member commented that it was important to look at collective skills and not judge applicants against each other. The key element of appointing was to judge applicants against the criteria set and to do so on merit.
- A Member asked about when interviews should be held by. The Scrutiny Manager reported that there was a driver for timing because independent co-optees were full voting members and needed to start as soon as possible and be involved in any induction events. The next meeting date proposed was 14 September 2012 and it would be helpful to have the interviews completed by that date in order for the Panel to be able to ratify appointments.
- Any volunteers would need to shortlist and interview. Members would need to agree the Membership and then ratify the appointment of the two Independent Co-optees at the next meeting. There would need to be a significant pool of Members, in case there were any apologies on the day.

RESOLVED

- 1 A Task Group to be appointed to shortlist and interview candidates that will report back to the Panel with a recommendation for ratification.**
- 2 The membership of the Task Group was agreed as follows; Barrie Patman, Peter Geary, David Carroll, Trevor Egleton, Kieron Mallon, Iain McCracken, Tony Page, Mark Booty, Dominic Boeck [and Anita Cranmer].**

- 3 That the Task Group should meet on Thursday 2 August 2012 to shortlist candidates.
- 4 That the Task Group should interview candidates on Friday 7 September 2012, in order that the Panel is able to ratify appointments at its next meeting in September.

6. Outline Work Programme

The Scrutiny Manager provided an overview of the issues involved in developing a work programme to ensure that the Panel can scrutinise effectively. She outlined the issues as follows:-

- Meeting legal requirements – further regulations are expected on the detail of the Panel's veto powers. It is anticipated that timescales would be laid out on when and how the Panel should consider to use its veto powers on the PCC's proposed precept level.
- Proactive scrutiny – the Panel has a role in supporting the PCC and one way to do this is through policy development and delivery.
- Set-piece meetings – the Panel had a number of legal requirements to meet including holding set piece meetings during the year e.g on the PCC's Annual Report and Confirmation Hearings.
- Informal Planning Meetings – the Panel will need to consider how it can be effective in questioning the PCC at its public sessions.
- Briefings – in order to conduce effective scrutiny Members need to be informed and updated regularly – what is the best way of achieving this without having too many meetings?
- Time commitment – including travel time too meetings
- Meeting venues – Members have already agreed to rotate meetings across the Thames Valley, with the costs of refreshments met by that Authority.
- Timings of Meetings – day or evening meetings? Some provisional meeting dates were proposed at the end of the report.
- Prior to the election of the PCC the Panel needs to prepare protocols for its working practices in relation to the Complaints Procedure, Memorandum of Understanding with the PCC, Public Involvement Strategy and Communications Protocol and relationship between the Panel and Local Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees.

Panel Members made the following comments:-

- To commence the meeting at 10am to miss rush hour and to hold briefing sessions before the formal meeting starts. The Police Authority had met during the day and this had worked well with Members and officers. A Member commented that day time meetings were difficult for people who worked but in response a comment was made that employers should be sympathetic.
- A Member asked about substitutes. Olwen Dutton reported that there was currently no power for substitutes as this had been agreed in the Panel Arrangements. This could be reviewed at the next Annual Meeting. However she did emphasis that only the Authority could appoint substitutes, not individual Members. In previous discussions Member had concluded that continuity was key and the development of debate would be lost with too many substitutes. A Member commented on his experience at national level where substitutes had been used – Members asked the same questions and it produced poorer outcomes.
- In terms of venues a Member commented that use should be made of the Police Headquarters in Kidlington. However Members had agreed that meetings should be rotated.

- A Member commented on the Work Programme stating that this should include working with Community Safety Partnerships and the important role that they play. In addition reference was made to Neighbourhood Action Groups and the link into the local community. There is an important flow of information generated in communities that should not be ignored.
- The next meeting was agreed on 14 September to be held in Milton Keynes at 10am but there should be some flexibility over the informal briefing dates.

The Scrutiny Manager reassured Members that the Panel would not work in isolation. It would work nationally with the LGA and the Centre for Public Scrutiny and with local organisations. An officer network was already working including a network across the Country. The LGA had already held an event for Authorities which had looked at a number of issues, including Confirmation Hearings and was also producing guidance on complaints. There was no need to reinvent the wheel and it was important to draw on past experience.

RESOLVED

- 1 That the next meeting should be held on Friday 14 September 2012 at 10am in Milton Keynes Council**
- 2 That further consideration be given to the induction/informal briefing dates.**
- 3 That informal briefings should take place half an hour before the formal meeting.**
- 4 That draft protocols should be developed using the whole Panel through electronic means.**

7. Draft Communications Plan

The Policy Officer for the Police and Crime Panel reported on the draft Communications Strategy. He commented that it was important to use existing communication networks, particularly with limited resources, to publicise the work of the Panel. Branding needed to be addressed and also evaluating and monitoring the impact of the Communications Strategy.

The draft Strategy included a SWOT analysis and communication objectives which included the following:-

- To raise awareness of the new position of the PCC and the new governance structures
- To raise the overall profile of the Panel
- Engaging with the public to get them involved with shaping the work of the Panel

The Strategy would have two phases – pre-election and post-election of the PCC.

During discussion the following comments were made:-

- Was it the Panel's responsibility to help raise the profile of the PCC. They would already have a good communication team. A Member commented that it should work two ways and the PCC and the Panel should promote each other. However, the Panel was priority.
- The Home Office would soon be starting national publicity on the role of the PCC before the elections in November. It was important to use this national campaign at a local level.
- It was important not to be a post box for the PCC and that there was clear signposting to the role of the PCC, Panel and Chief Constable.
- Use should be made of local networks.
- With any SWOT analysis there should be an action plan to develop the work of the Panel. This should also include community safety.

- There should be clear links with Community Safety Partnerships and NAGs and there should be a separate paragraph on this area in the Strategy.
- There was a concern that the PCC budget would be slashed once they had been elected.

RESOLVED

That the draft Strategy should be revised taking on board the Panel's comments and re-circulated to finalise the document.

8. Draft Budget for the Police and Crime Panel

The Scrutiny Manager reported on the draft indicative costs for supporting the Police and Crime Panel for the next six months (funding up to the end of the year).

RESOLVED

That the Panel agreed the indicative budget as set out in the report, subject to any significant variations to be reported back to the Panel for its agreement.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Friday 14 September 2012 at 10am in Room 2, Milton Keynes Council.

CHAIRMAN