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Frontline Consulting Associates'

Report on the Fourth National Conference for Police and Crime Panels

Police and crime panels: facing the future



Friday 3 July 2015

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(with thanks for the support of Nottinghamshire PCP and Nottinghamshire County Council)

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Compiled by Tim Young, Lead on Policing and Crime for Frontline Consulting

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Foreword

Frontline Consulting Associates held its fourth annual conference for chairs, members and officers of police and crime panels on Friday 3 July 2015.

Grant Thornton UK LLP sponsored the conference and the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel and Nottinghamshire County Council hosted it at County Hall, Nottingham. Representatives from 24 Police and Crime Panels (PCPs) from across England and Wales discussed key challenges, shared experiences and considered the lessons from their work over the past three years.

The re-election of the Conservative Party in May removed any uncertainty over the future of police and crime panels (PCPs). The theme of this conference, ‘Facing the future’, reflected the new government’s manifesto commitment that police and crime commissioners (PCCs) and their PCPs would continue to be a key feature of policing accountability – but that they would be working with continuing budget pressures and austerity.

It was recognised that risk profiles will also change as forces implement ambitious transformation change programmes in response to the financial challenges.

Three presentations provided an overview of the challenges that PCCs and PCPs face. These were by Zoë Billingham, HM Inspector of Constabulary; Paul Grady, Head of Police and Iain Murray, Deputy Head of Police at Grant Thornton; and Tim Young, Lead on Policing and Crime at Frontline Consulting Associates.

Conference introduction

Chair of Nottinghamshire PCP and conference chair Christine Goldstraw opened by noting that although the election of the Conservative government had removed the question mark over the future of PCPs, panels, PCCs, police forces and all those involved in crime and community safety work still face other uncertainties and challenges. Those challenges include increased terrorism, people trafficking and the need to collaborate more regionally while responding to increasing local demands. The key challenge will be how the police service adapts over the next five years, given the prospect of continued austerity across almost all parts of the public sector.

Before the presentations, the chair invited delegates to discuss in small groups how police and crime panels might address the new challenges in policing and crime prevention and help improve delivery of the police service in their areas.

In their feedback, delegates highlighted the political context leading up to the PCC elections in May. Two important tasks that delegates suggested for panels were:

- managing engagement through the electoral period, with the PCC continuing to fulfil their responsibilities and the PCP remaining independent
- keeping the electoral process away from the panel’s proper scrutiny of the PCC.

Some delegates also wished to encourage a better turnout for the election of PCCs next May. They envisaged contributing to this by challenging their PCC on its record over the last four years, as a final holding to account.

The financial context to policing and crime prevention loomed large. Delegates raised various points about how panels might address this challenge:

- increasing their understanding of the funding issues

- ensuring budget cuts do not affect local policing: rather than cutting frontline officers, seeking to save money through asset disposals and collaboration
- increasing collaboration and encouraging strategic alliances between police forces – for example, West Mercia and Warwickshire share offices and have one joint audit committee; and other forces are pursuing strategic alliances and collaborations of varying scales
- supporting increased collaboration with the ambulance and fire services.

Beyond the immediacy of budget pressures, delegates also identified a need to agree with the PCC on the challenges facing the PCC's force area. Delegates expect major issues to include child sexual exploitation (CSE), domestic abuse and cyber crime.

For panels to make a difference, there was support for taking a more proactive approach to scrutiny which focuses on where they can best make an impact. Delegates acknowledged that panels

have been on a learning curve for the first few years, but can draw on those experiences to make more progress, while being aware of the need to balance support and challenge of PCCs.

Work that delegates mentioned included:

- understanding how the PCC commissions services
- monitoring the performance of a PCC's work on victims and witnesses
- using a task and finish group to look at how complaints are dealt with
- understanding changes in crime recording methods, as a basis for scrutiny
- increasing transparency
- understanding the work of the PCC and the force's joint audit committees
- increasing partnership working and interaction with the PCC: if partners are not engaged, action may not happen
- increasing engagement with the public by PCCs, through more public meetings and increased publicity about the PCC and the panels.

Platform presentations

The HMIC perspective

Zoë Billingham, HM Inspector of Constabulary

Zoë presented a perspective from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) on the challenges ahead for the police service. She used an interactive approach by posing questions to the audience.

Zoe started with some key facts:

- Funding to individual forces reduced by 12% to 23% per force between 2010/11 and 2015/16
- There are 35,000 fewer officers and staff across the sector
- Reported crime is down
- Demand is growing in other ways

As a result, forces need to change the way they respond to new threats, manage demand and public expectations, and get the basics right.

In the climate of continuing budget pressures, they need to confront three questions. What is the mission of policing? What needs to change? And what must we preserve?

The answers to the first question, by common acclaim, were three essential duties: to protect the public; to keep people safe, especially the most vulnerable; and to prevent crime.

But given the continuing financial reductions, forces need to make changes to be able to deliver such a service, said delegates. These include managing demand and expectations; improving the IT capabilities of policing; integrating with and sharing other capabilities; addressing funding arrangements.

While delegates accepted change as necessary, they agreed that they need to retain some key features of the policing service, such as:

- an accessible, frontline, preventative presence
- the highest quality investigations and safeguarding of the public
- best practice in joint- and cross-force working
- access to the full range of specialist capabilities
- shared responsibilities as services of last resort.

Zoë then focused on the new and increasing threats for policing such as cyber and digital crime, CSE, trafficking, honour-based crime, female genital mutilation (FGM), serious sexual offences, and counter terrorism.

She suggested that both strategic and tactical responses to these threats are necessary. Strategically, these include local, cross-force and national responses, involving swift, concerted action and clear leadership. Responses will also need to extend beyond organisational boundaries.

She summarised tactics in terms of the need to understand then minimise demand and threat, harm and risk; and to understand then maximise proactivity and joint responses.

Zoë referred delegates to a recent publication by HMIC ‘Reshaping policing for the public: a discussion paper from the advisory group on the national debate on policing in austerity’ (available at goo.gl/Hiysgc). This goes into more detail about ideas that could shape policing in the future.

Finally, although Zoë noted that HMIC’s responsibility is to inspect the police service, the recommendations from its extensive range of publications give PCPs a good flavour of where the risks are in forces and what is being done about them. Reports and their findings, as well as subsequent responses from the PCC and chief constable, are available on the HMIC website (www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic) and are publicly available. The website also holds other useful data, by force and by “most similar groups” (MSGs) of police force areas.

HMIC’s police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) assessments are of value too. See www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/peel-assessments.

‘Police: the road to 2020’

Paul Grady, Head of Police and Iain Murray, Deputy Head of Police at Grant Thornton

Paul and Iain explored the challenges faced by the police service over the next five years, and the risks involved as forces implement ambitious change programmes in response.

The context is the unprecedented financial challenge that PCCs and forces face, over a relatively short period. Meeting this challenge has required forces to implement significant savings programmes while continuing to deliver the service within severely constrained resources. Forces are also engaging in significant transformation programmes and collaboration – within the sector and with other sectors – while exploring innovative ways to tackle demand management and crime prevention.

As a result, the police sector may end up looking very different. Change is happening at different speeds. Different forces face different scales of challenge and varying timelines. Paul and Iain therefore concluded that there will be no ‘one size fits all’ solution.

The financial challenge for forces was underlined recently by the National Audit Office report ‘Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales’, which indicates the significant increase in financial risk and its impact on service provision.

Crucially, the Home Office’s current funding approach does not consider the circumstances of individual forces. It has applied the same percentage funding reduction to all forces, without full consideration of the split between local and central government funding, or of forces’ local circumstances, income, reserves or wider financial pressures. As a result, some forces are more adversely affected than others and closer to a tipping point. The Home Office has subsequently consulted on changes to this funding formula in the autumn of 2015.

Currently, forces estimate they will need to use an average of 15% of their reserves to offset the savings required for 2015/16. Some forces are looking to use reserves to balance budgets up to 2020. Yet forces also need some of the £2 billion that they have in reserves to invest in the changes necessary to meet these challenges.

On the basis of this and additional evidence provided in the presentation, Paul and Iain concluded that the police sector faces a massive increase in risk. This in turn requires a robust set of governance and accountability mechanisms.

Addressing their recommendations directly to the audience of chairs, members and officers supporting PCPs, they suggested:

- a forward plan setting out the policy areas where a panel can most effectively support and challenge the PCC to improve overall outcomes
- a focus on strategic issues, by engaging with public and partner organisations
- a review of training needs and resource requirements
- the development of methods to communicate with the public, including webcasting and social media, to demonstrate the impact of the panel's work.

Innovative responses

Tim Young, Lead on Policing and Crime at Frontline Consulting Associates

Tim gave a national overview of PCP innovation and proactive responses to challenges. The afternoon workshops explored several of these in more detail.

One of the challenges that PCPs have faced since their inception is how to hold

PCCs to account for their performance in delivering police and crime plans.

The Home Office seems to have focused on simply reviewing the PCC's annual report. In practice, PCCs have had to supplement this with a year-round approach to monitoring.

A number of panels have encountered a lack of detail in the police and crime plans and a lack of information about their PCC's delivery actions. Gloucestershire PCP took a very early approach to examining delivery plans for each of the overall police and crime plan objectives. It brought in the delivery leads to answer questions, some of whom were outside the police and the office of the police and crime commissioner (OPCC).

Derbyshire's solution to this problem has been a jointly agreed framework with the OPCC, based on the PCC's business plan, which emphasises the contribution that members can make towards improving the PCC's performance and overall delivery. A key aspect of this approach is its focus on outcomes for residents and community groups.

Tim then focused on how panels had addressed shortcomings in their relationship with commissioners. This had been highlighted at the previous year's conference, and seemed often to stem from mutual misunderstanding of the PCP's role.

Over that year, local government's ability to make those relationships work has improved by building bridges patiently.

Panels have also focused on trying to improve partnership working by the PCC, because PCCs have not always appreciated fully the benefits of such activity. PCPs have suggested and fostered links with other agencies outside the police. This work has been particularly important where PCCs have not had the same understanding of the benefits of partnership working as their PCPs. The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland experience, where the PCC instigated a judicial review that failed, illustrates this.

Panels have also become more innovative and effective in the way that they have sourced and used data to identify challenges and areas for improvement.

Warwickshire PCP, for example, used its contacts with third sector and community organisations to evaluate the needs and expectations of victims against existing provision in Warwickshire.

For its budget scrutiny work, Essex PCP used OPCC and HMIC data to ask challenging questions about the PCC's budget and precept proposals. Cheshire PCP held a stakeholder event on domestic abuse. This involved councils, police, community safety partnerships, health and wellbeing boards, voluntary sector and provider organisations, to gather evidence and provide tangible recommendations to the PCC and to other agencies.

Tim referred to the recent report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, which drew attention to the "... scope for police and crime panels to develop a more strategic focus with better forward planning." One example of an innovative approach has been Hampshire PCP's shift to all-day meetings. In these, the morning focuses on PCP statutory functions, while the afternoon consists of a scrutiny and evidence gathering session, based on plan

priorities, with written and oral evidence from the PCC, partner stakeholders and the public. The PCP also has a working group that prioritises with the OPCC those topics that best contribute to the PCC's work programme.

Other examples of effective work planning and the use of proactive scrutiny include a quarterly focus on one of the PCC plan's strategic objectives, with key lines of enquiry prepared in advance, as Suffolk PCP does. Thames Valley panel has used themed meetings, for example with local experts on rural crime. Panels also now use task and finish groups more widely. These focus on challenges such as police visibility, responsiveness and communications – as addressed in Bedfordshire PCP's "Creating confident communities" report, (goo.gl/gPIaZK) – or FGM, as West Midlands PCP tackled recently (goo.gl/avg7gr).

Another area of innovation and improvement by panels that Tim identified was around how they conduct budget and precept scrutiny.

More panels are adopting a year-round approach to budget scrutiny, maintaining a 'big picture' view of financial pressures and arranging to see detailed information early, as Cumbria PCP has done for example. Other panels, such as Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire, are holding preparatory meetings, with input from their OPCCs; or taking a task group approach to develop key lines of enquiry, as Essex, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk and West Mercia, to name a few, have done. However, there are still some panels, such as Cambridgeshire, whose PCCs provide scant detail and explanation in the draft medium term financial strategy. This limits in-depth exploration and questioning of the budget and precept.

Previous major challenges for panels have been the Lincolnshire task group's review of the PCC decision to suspend the temporary chief constable and South Yorkshire's emergency meeting on child sexual exploitation and the position of its PCC.

CSE is a major challenge for PCCs, forces and panels and was the subject of a workshop at the conference. Councillor Trevor Egleton, Chair of Thames Valley Panel, led this and explained how the panel is addressing the issue.

Other issues have been mid-term PCC changes – in the West Midlands sadly in the case of Bob Jones's untimely death – and most recently in the case of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland PCC taking leave of absence with an incapacitating condition and requesting a temporary replacement. In the latter case, the PCP agreed to make representations to the government to iron out some evident weaknesses in the legislation that impact negatively on their ability to do the job that panels are charged with. In the event, the PCC's rapid recovery meant a stand-in PCC was not required.

Increasingly, PCPs are addressing the growing trend for forces to collaborate, as has been the case in the East Midlands, for example, since 2002. Some forces have linked up in strategic alliances, for example, Avon and Somerset with

Wiltshire; Devon and Cornwall with Dorset; and Warwickshire with West Mercia. A further trend in collaboration is for 'blue light' services to share facilities such as control rooms and stations – a development that the government is encouraging. North Yorkshire PCC and Fire and Rescue Authority, for example, are forming a strategic partnership for policing and fire and rescue provision, to 2020 and beyond.

These developments bring a range of challenges for PCPs, including in the area of governance. A natural progression for panels in meeting those governance challenges is to share work programmes to identify areas of mutual interest, as the East Midlands police and crime panel network of five panels is already doing.

Tim concluded by directing delegates to a dedicated police and crime panel website serviced by Frontline Consulting, which contains news items, features and a secure area for registered users to network and share ideas and information; and to its Twitter account for regular updates.

Questions to the panellists

Drawing on a further round of group discussions, delegates put questions to the speakers, including:

- Should there be a more consistent framework for PCPs to fulfil their remit?
- How well have PCCs fulfilled the government's objectives?
- When is information likely to emerge from the Scottish model of policing? Are there any early indicators around efficiency of the new arrangements?
- How do you measure whether a force is no longer sustainable?
- Should the chief constable be allowed to answer questions that are really directed at the PCC?
- Are there any greater powers envisaged for PCPs following the general election?
- What powers do PCPs have to challenge the PCC when there is an operational issue?
- If there are indications that performance of the force is extremely poor, should the PCP ask the PCC to intervene directly, even if they are operational rather than strategic failings?

Of these questions, perhaps the one which potentially affected all participants was 'How do you measure whether a force is no longer sustainable?'

Zoë Billingham said one question that HMIC ask in force inspections focuses on police force stress and the extent to which the public are at risk of an unsustainable force. Despite force achievements in responding to the austerity programme, in the next three to five years some individual forces will not be viable in terms of being able to provide a safe and efficient service to the public.

While there is scope for significant efficiencies if forces collaborate, improve their ICT and understand demand better, the policing service cannot simply carry on as it is. Hence, the importance of the National Debate Advisory Group convened by HMIC. This brings together experts from across the police service to support a national debate on the further changes needed in policing.

Afternoon workshops

PCP practitioners provided a choice of seven workshops for delegates.

The road to 2020: how will the police service adapt?

Facilitators: Marcus Ward, Member, Grant Thornton Police Board; and Iain Murray, Deputy Head of Police, Grant Thornton

The context for this workshop was the prospect of five more years of austerity across almost all parts of the public sector. Although all police bodies across the country will feel the impact of this, Grant Thornton's work with the sector has identified diverse views on how it will adapt to meet the challenge.

The workshop therefore explored six possible scenarios for the future of the sector. It canvassed workshop participants on the most likely scenarios for their forces now and in five years' time, through discussion and hand-held voting devices. It also compared their views with those of others in the police sector in response to the same scenarios.

The workshop also asked participants how they felt the police sector as a whole is coping now and how will it cope in five years' time.

The facilitators used the 2020 model to stimulate debate and discussion about what the financial outlook will mean for police and crime panels in their scrutiny role.

Key points that emerged from the discussion were as follows.

At a time of increasing demand and reducing financial resources, more effective demand management is essential. The risk is compounded by a finding in the National Audit Office's recent report 'Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales'. This revealed that while police forces in England and Wales have reduced costs since 2011, they do not have a clear understanding of the demands placed upon them, nor of the factors that affect their costs.

Secondly, neighbourhood policing is a cornerstone of what the public wants the police to provide. There is a danger that, in the economic push towards regionalisation of policing, the operational nuances that neighbourhood policing can provide will be lost. This would weaken the service to communities.

Workshop participants agreed that technology will play a huge part in securing a viable police sector for the future. But there are no simple answers to these problems.

Effective governance in the police sector – lessons for police and crime panels

Facilitators: Parris Williams and Stephanie Liu, Members of the Grant Thornton Police Board; and Paul Grady, Head of Police, Grant Thornton

This workshop drew on a recently published report by Grant Thornton, ‘Examining the evidence: audit committee effectiveness in the police sector’, (goo.gl/mq0629). Although the report is directed at police joint audit committees, many of the issues raised are relevant for PCPs.

This workshop shared the experiences of audit committee members in promoting effective governance in their organisations. By also drawing on police and crime panels’ experiences, it identified a number of related points and lessons for PCPs.

The report distils the challenges that audit committees face into three broad areas.

- 1 The governance model devised for the police is less well defined than in other sectors. Audit committee effectiveness can be impaired by a lack of engagement from the wider organisations they serve. Despite this, some audit committees are still able to make useful contributions
- 2 The scale of the change ahead for the sector means that, if governance oversight is not effective, there is an increased risk of major programme failure
- 3 Committees work most effectively where PCCs and chief constables see them as an ally to support them in the journey ahead

Governance issues around collaboration programmes and strategic alliances interest both audit committees and panels. The report noted that “many audit committees were not aware of the work of the PCP and its key areas of focus”. Equally, it appears that panels generally have not paid much attention to the work of audit committees, nor taken them into account. This is particularly the case in relation to committees’ concern with risk management and assurance papers relating to major change programmes.

With regard to risk management, it emerged from discussions that some panels understood the risks that their PCCs face and how those risks affect the delivery of the police and crime plan, by examining a risk profile, for example. However, others were less aware.

Not all PCPs represented in the workshop understood all of the risks facing their PCC and what measures were in place to respond to these risks.

Learning points for PCP members would be to understand the strategic risks facing PCCs and their forces; the impact those risks have on the effective delivery of the budget and the objectives set out in the police and crime plan; and the steps PCCs are making to mitigate those risks.

Several other points emerged in the workshop.

There are stark differences between PCPs in terms of attendance by chief constables at PCP meetings. There is also some variation in attendance by PCCs at meetings that they are invited to.

All workshop participants explained their frustration at the lack of information that PCCs provided to them at their meetings. They said much of it was superfluous, hard to discern or lacking in detail.

On the whole though, and with the caveat of these data quality issues, PCPs felt they were provided with sufficient timely and accessible information to enable them to hold the PCC to account.

However, unlike council executives, PCCs are not producing routinely a plan of decisions that PCPs can use in their work programme planning. Conversely, PCPs are not specifying routinely the information that they require from PCCs to enable them to carry out their work.

There was a consensus that panels did not always scrutinise enough.

While some panels have provision for public questions, others do not. Panels also lack the time and resources to engage actively with the public to incorporate their views into panels' scrutiny work.

There is value in panels setting up task and finish groups to focus on specific issues and facilitating a more effective challenge process by collating and distilling data and evidence.

Participants also thought that panels need more training in scrutiny, risk management and governance. The high turnover of PCP members inhibits the accumulation of experience. The constraints on panel members' time and resources hamper this further.

Finally, there was a consensus that the budget for PCPs is insufficient.

Child sexual exploitation – what are the key questions for PCPs?

Facilitators: Councillor Trevor Egleton, Chairman Thames Valley PCP, and Clare Gray, Committee Adviser to Thames Valley PCP

The workshop drew on the developing work of Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel (TVPCP), which decided in March 2015 to set up a sub-committee to support, monitor and scrutinise the PCC on preventing Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

TVPCP chose to set up a sub-committee rather than a task and finish group as members wanted to support and monitor the PCC's performance rather than undertake a specific investigation. The sub-committee would also look at how the PCC was working with stakeholders and partners in their prevention and detection strategies.

Many points emerged in the workshop.

CSE is a wide-ranging problem and it is therefore important for any police and crime panel engaging with this issue to focus on areas in which it can contribute and add value.

A number of panels have raised the issue of addressing CSE, with their PCCs providing and talking to reports at a panel meeting. It is important for public confidence to have these discussions and debates in public.

It is also important to examine this topic pre-emptively, before cases hit the headlines.

Not all PCCs have made CSE a strategic priority, so panels may need to challenge the police and crime plan and the PCC's performance, checking what policies they are applying, how robust they are and what monitoring the PCC is undertaking. There needs to be clarity in the delivery of strategies and action plans.

Panels can look into a number of specific areas, as part of a challenge and support process, such as: partnership working (see below); victims' services commissioning; and lessons learnt as policy is implemented.

Another way to approach the issue is to focus on prevention, enforcement, prosecution and offender management.

An important part of tackling CSE is to consider the range of partners dealing with this work. One of TVPCP's aims is to ensure a consistent approach and co-operation of partners across a diverse area such as the Thames Valley.

An overview of partnership working will involve agencies such as health and social care and those in the public and voluntary sector, as well as the PCC's responsibilities in relation to the criminal justice system and victims' services commissioning.

Panels need to be aware of the boundaries within which they operate and not overstep the mark in this sensitive area. A particular boundary to be aware of is questioning operational matters.

Local authorities with responsibility for children's welfare may also be conducting their own enquiries. For example, TVPCP's work will be linked with that of one of Buckinghamshire County Council's select committees, which is currently undertaking an inquiry into CSE. It is important to ensure that there is no duplication of work and that panels draw on existing work where possible to avoid increasing pressure on other agencies.

Participants highlighted the importance of trying to keep politics out of the discussions. A panel needs to think strategically across boundaries. The issue requires panels to keep their lines of enquiry focused, to word questions in a sensitive way and always to ask supplementary questions.

These could include:

- How is the PCC monitoring CSE?
- What policies are in place to tackle CSE? How robust are they?
- Is the PCC happy with the speed of progress on cases?

Attention has focused on CSE and organised gangs, but online grooming is an issue that can cross geographical boundaries. What action is the PCC taking around cyber crime?

A suggested innovation for the future was that panels need to push the boundaries beyond their remit and to focus on the concept that “We are here for the public”, with the intention of being able to scrutinise more effectively, including around operational matters.

Strategic alliances between forces – what are the challenges and opportunities for PCPs?

Facilitator: Suzanne O’Leary, Overview and Scrutiny Manager, Worcestershire County Council, supporting West Mercia PCP

Some Forces have linked up in ‘Strategic Alliances’, for example Avon and Somerset with Wiltshire, Devon and Cornwall with Dorset, Warwickshire with West Mercia, and Bedfordshire with Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

This workshop looked at the type of concerns and challenges for panels that this development throws up and the effectiveness with which they scrutinise and hold to account. Two such concerns are that a force must retain its independence and identity within an alliance and that the arrangement should deliver the best outcomes for its area.

Warwickshire PCP accepts that, given the significant reductions in policing budgets in recent years, the force is in a stronger position with the alliance than on its own. However, the panel has a strong view that the retention by the PCC of Warwickshire’s chief constable provides reassurance.

So far, both panels have focused primarily on their own elements of the alliance, including the budget, and have not yet had the opportunity to look at issues that cut across the full alliance.

Pointers or lessons for panels in current or future alliances include:

- being clear about the purpose and objectives of any proposed alliance from the outset – and being clear about the panel’s role is if a PCC intends to go down this route
- if the driver for an alliance is financial, being clear about what financial savings they seek so that there can be a proper review of whether they have been achieved or not
- being mindful as a panel that while a strategic alliance across county-based forces may have advantages in terms of policing, the complexity of regional arrangements may mean it is no longer coterminous with other major public sector providers, such as the NHS
- keeping a strategic alliance under review – Wiltshire PCP agreed in June 2015 to set up a task group to support the delivery of their strategic alliance, and has timetabled an item on their strategic alliance for every meeting in its 2015/16 work programme

- informal meetings of the chairs of the panels with the PCCs to discuss the development of an alliance; West Mercia and Warwickshire PCP chairs have agreed to this
- a suggested innovation for the future was for panels in strategic alliance areas, and elsewhere, to share their work programmes to identify areas of mutual interest that would benefit from cross-panel working.

PCCs and partnership working – how can PCPs assist?

Facilitators: Councillor Joe Orson, Chair Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland PCP, and Sam Weston, PCP Support Officer

This workshop first explored the experience of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland PCP working with its PCC. Initially the panel felt the PCC found it difficult to understand the partnership context. This first arose when the PCP considered his first police and crime plan, which in the panel's view did not take

adequate account of the work and role of other agencies outside of the police in regard to community safety. The panel emphasised this role to the PCC, who took greater account of it in his revised plan.

The PCP holds regular pre-meetings with the OPCC to go through the meeting agendas. This has worked well and helped to improve relationships between the servicing authority and the police. Regular meetings to discuss work programming have also led to improved relationships and working at Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

However, the PCC learnt a harsh lesson in proceeding with a judicial review on section 106 funding that failed and cost the taxpayer significant funds. Arising from this exercise, the PCC had agreed to engage positively on partnership working.

Points from the workshop included the following.

Some panels have formalised the work between the PCP and the PCC via a memorandum of understanding, as a means of promoting partnership working. This works best as the culmination of a process of dialogue rather than a paper exercise.

Task and finish work can be a good way to improve relationships between the panel and the OPCC and to gain a deeper understanding of issues.

Close links between panels and community safety partnerships (CSPs) can help to increase understanding. The PCPs need to draw on this existing expertise in order to enhance their role. A PCC's engagement in the work of CSPs and strategic community safety bodies is of enormous value.

The term 'partnership working' can, however, be used as a means of taking credit for successes and avoiding blame for failure.

Suggested innovations included:

- developing a model for a partnership structure
- setting up a task and finish group on the PCC's engagement with partner agencies, to make recommendations on where it could make improvements.

PCCs' estates strategies: what are the critical factors for PCPs?

Facilitator: Paul Cain, Independent Member, Bedfordshire PCP

Most if not all PCCs have developed or are developing a police estates strategy. This is to save money on the cost of running the present police estate and to protect frontline policing jobs.

The workshop looked at the experience of Bedfordshire PCP, whose first piece of pre-decision scrutiny work was to establish a task and finish group on this issue. Set up in September 2013, it reported its recommendations to the panel and then to the PCC in November 2013.

The context for the work was that Bedfordshire faces very challenging times regarding police funding, as demonstrated by the precept referendum in May 2015. The force has therefore had to ensure it maximises its effective use of resources while continuing to protect the public.

Any estate closure is therefore potentially a difficult decision. The PCC had recently carried out a public consultation on policing services and the results formed part of the review.

During the review, the task and finish group found the PCC and all OPCC staff to be open and cooperative in assisting with the review, which was a major plus for the first proactive scrutiny topic.

The review, endorsed by the full panel, supported the final estates strategy, but made a number of recommendations. The full report is available at goo.gl/iV1BzT.

Most activity surrounding Bedfordshire police estates has revolved around HMIC actions in condemning certain buildings,

which resulted in some swift building work. A full review of the estates strategy is due at the next PCP meeting with the commissioner now that Bedfordshire's funding issues are slightly clearer.

Key points that emerged during the workshop were:

- Estates are a key issue. Although the PCC accepted the recommendations, they have still not been implemented.
- New public access points should be established before closures are implemented. In Bedfordshire, these should be in public buildings or for police matters only, not in shops.
- Reports from task and finish groups need to include a timeline for action.
- A suggested innovation was that panels should check that any PCC strategy has a detailed implementation plan.

'Blue light' services collaboration: how can PCPs best play a challenging yet supportive role?

Facilitator: Sue Morgan, Head of Democratic Services, Suffolk County Council, supporting Suffolk PCP

The Government is committed to enabling fire and rescue and police services to work together more closely. In Suffolk, the PCC, as a strong advocate for efficiency through collaboration, has an ongoing blue light collaboration strategy to reduce costs.

The fire and rescue service has already collaborated successfully with Cambridgeshire and has a 999 combined fire control room in Cambridgeshire. Suffolk Constabulary, Suffolk Fire and Rescue and the East of England Ambulance Service won a government grant recently of nearly £5 million for a potential three-year programme that could bring the number of shared fire stations to 12 out of a total of 35 fire and rescue service buildings.

Suffolk PCP has faced a number of challenges in addressing this issue, including:

- the PCC's propensity for openness versus officer respect for commercial and staff sensitivity
- getting evidence on which to base its investigations when key documents are not in the public arena or arrive late: how do you prepare key lines of enquiry for scrutiny if information is lacking?
- the decision-making process spans two PCCs and constabularies – but there has been reticence about engaging with Norfolk PCP around timing and the time commitment for some PCP members

The workshop explored the wider context to these developments. There was interest in what the impact might be of the expected legislation in this area and devolution initiatives on blue light services – would PCCs be given responsibility for other services in the future? What would be the role of elected mayors with regard to blue light services?

While some good examples of collaboration exist – for example, multi-service vehicles and combined control rooms – participants noted some specific challenges and barriers in the pursuit of this objective:

- Coterminosity – collaboration is perceived as easier within a PCC's own area
- The financial standing of respective stakeholders – there are differentials in precept between different areas and anomalies in funding
- A PCC's own perception of their role and standing (as a local Home Secretary?)

More broadly, delegates noted other points that might inhibit a panel's ability to play a challenging role in these developments:

- a panel's membership and their willingness to provide constructive challenge
- the extent to which politics comes into the relationship between the chair of the PCP and the PCC
- the transparency of public meetings versus a need for candid responses to challenging questions, and the impact of policy on webcasting panel meetings
- the willingness of chief constables to attend panel meetings to provide technical detail on questions relating to a PCC's responsibility – some PCPs find that the PCC never goes to their meetings alone, while for others, the CC never attends.

Tips emerging from the workshop were:

- To share key questions that have been worked up with PCP members through an informal workshop with the PCC and/or the OPCC. This enables them to gather evidence and be prepared for detailed PCP questioning
- To ask for a business case for any closer working, including criteria and any weighting, to see if savings and efficiencies can be made
- To obtain views of other blue light services, and coordinate with partner PCPs to ask common questions about control rooms, premises, back office functions, multi-service vehicles and training

Closing remarks

Ann Reeder, Director of Frontline Consulting, closed the conference by thanking all the speakers, workshop facilitators, participants, conference sponsors Grant Thornton, hosts, Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel, staff of Nottinghamshire County Council, Keith Ford and Peter Barker, and the chair of the conference, Christine Goldstraw.

Ann hoped that the conference had helped to share good practice between panels and promote innovation. She noted that the conference had given a speaker a greater sense of the significance of PCPs and the value of sustaining and developing contact.

She encouraged participants to use the dedicated PCP website www.pcps-direct.net and its Twitter account @PCPsdirect in between conferences to feed in good practice ideas and experience, questions and comments. The website also carries postings of briefings from time to time,

as well as examples of interesting practice that a number of panels – including Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Hampshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands – have submitted.

All panels are welcome to send in features and/or digest items. Those who register on the site are able to set up invitation-only circles or open networks on particular themes or for groups of PCPs or roles, for example, independent members.

Ann asked participants the best time for the conference in 2016; October was favoured in case of any changes to panels' work or membership after PCC elections in May. She encouraged delegates to suggest ideas for the conference's main theme, and speakers and workshops that they would like to see.

Appendix 1: Programme

10:15 am	Welcome and opening remarks Chair: Christine Goldstraw OBE JP, Independent Member and Chair, Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel
10:25 am	Setting the scene: PCPs' opening reflections on the year ahead
10:50 am	An HMIC perspective on the challenges ahead for the police service Zoë Billingham, HM Inspector of Constabulary
11:15 am	Police: the road to 2020 Paul Grady, Head of Police, Grant Thornton UK LLP and Iain Murray, Deputy Head of Police, Grant Thornton UK LLP
11:35 am	A national perspective on PCP innovation and proactive responses to challenges Tim Young, Lead on Policing and Crime, Frontline Consulting
11:55 pm	Table-based preparation of questions and comments for the panel
12:15 pm	Questions and comments to the panel of speakers
12:45 pm	Lunch and networking

1:30 pm	<p>Workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The road to 2020: how will the police service adapt? • Effective governance in the police sector – lessons for police and crime panels • Child sexual exploitation – what are the key questions for PCPs to focus on? • Strategic alliances between forces – what are the challenges and opportunities for PCPs? • PCCs and partnership working – how can PCPs assist? • PCCs’ estates strategies: what are the critical factors for PCPs? • ‘Blue light’ services collaboration: how can PCPs best play a challenging yet supportive role?
2:35 pm	<p>Workshops repeated</p>
3:40 pm	<p>Plenary session Feedback – one innovation for 2015 from each workshop Closing comments: PCPs – the year ahead</p>
4:00 pm	<p>Close and evaluation</p>

Appendix 2: List of participants

Name	Police Force Area	Role and local authority
Councillor Fiona Chapman MBE	Bedfordshire	PCP Chair; Member of Central Bedfordshire Council
Councillor Peter Hollick	Bedfordshire	PCP Member; Central Bedfordshire Council
Paul Cain	Bedfordshire	PCP Vice-chair; Independent Member
Councillor Aysegul Gurbuz	Bedfordshire	PCP Member; Luton Council
Hugh Bartos	Bedfordshire	Support Officer
Councillor Jason Ablewhite	Cambridgeshire	PCP Chair; Huntingdonshire DC
Councillor Andy Coles	Cambridgeshire	PCP Member; Peterborough City Council
Councillor Peter Reeve	Cambridgeshire	PCP Member; Cambridgeshire County Council
Edward Leigh	Cambridgeshire	Independent Member
Councillor Ann Sinnott	Cambridgeshire	PCP Reserve; Cambridge City Council
Jamie Leeman	Cambridgeshire	Officer
Paulina Ford	Cambridgeshire	Senior Governance Officer, Peterborough City Council
Ian Phillips	Cambridgeshire	PCP Lead Officer; Peterborough City Council
Bob Fousert	Cheshire	Independent Member
Mark Clement	Cumbria	PCP Support Officer
Linda Graham	Cumbria	Scrutiny Officer
Councillor Richard Bright	Derbyshire	PCP Member, Derbyshire Dales District Council
Councillor John Frudd	Derbyshire	PCP Co-opted Member; Derbyshire County Council

Councillor Jane Orton	Derbyshire	PCP Member; Amber Valley Borough Council
David Rose	Derbyshire	Support officer, Derbyshire PCP Derbyshire County Council
Andrew Edwards	Dyfed Powys	Chairman, Independent Member
Tim Daniel	Frontline Consulting	
Ann Reeder	Frontline Consulting	Director
Tim Young	Frontline Consulting	Associate and Lead on Policing and Crime
Councillor Brian Tipper	Gloucestershire	PCP Member; Gloucestershire County Council
Councillor Helena McCloskey	Gloucestershire	PCP Member; Cheltenham Borough Council
Councillor Roger Wilson	Gloucestershire	PCP Member; Gloucestershire County Council
Paul Grady	Grant Thornton UK LLP	Head of Police
Iain Murray	Grant Thornton UK LLP	Deputy Head of Police
Stephanie Liu	Grant Thornton UK LLP	Member, Grant Thornton Police Board
Marcus Ward	Grant Thornton UK LLP	Member, Grant Thornton Police Board
Parris Williams	Grant Thornton UK LLP	Member, Grant Thornton Police Board
Zoë Billingham	HM Inspectorate of Constabulary	HM Inspector of Constabulary
Matthew Nundy	Humberside	Support Officer
Daniel Marsh	Humberside	Support Officer
Councillor Don Sloan	Kent	PCP Member, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Councillor Tony Harrison	Lancashire	PCP Member; Burnley Borough Council
Councillor Joe Orson JP	Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland	PCP Chairman; Leicestershire County Council
Sam Weston	Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland	PCP Secretariat; Democratic Services Officer, Leicestershire County Council
Councillor Geoff Hazelwood	Lincolnshire	PCP Member; North Kesteven District Council
Emma Baldwin	Lincolnshire	PCP Support Officer; East Lindsey District Council
Councillor Dr Christopher Kemp	Norfolk	PCP Vice Chair; South Norfolk District Council
Councillor Carl Les	North Yorkshire	PCP Member; North Yorkshire County Council
Ray Busby	North Yorkshire	North Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel Secretariat
Kirk Harrison	Northamptonshire	Democracy Officer, Northamptonshire County Council
Christine Goldstraw OBE JP	Nottinghamshire	Chair, Nottinghamshire PCP (Independent Member) and the Conference Chair
Suma Harding	Nottinghamshire	PCP Independent Member
Councillor Neghat Khan	Nottinghamshire	PCP Member; Nottingham City Council
Councillor Debbie Mason	Nottinghamshire	PCP Member; Rushcliffe Borough Council
Councillor Maddy Richardson	Nottinghamshire	PCP Member; Bassetlaw District Council
Bob Vaughan-Newton	Nottinghamshire	PCP Independent Member
Keith Ford	Nottinghamshire	PCP Support Officer; Team Manager, Democratic Services, Nottinghamshire County Council

Peter Barker	Nottinghamshire	Democratic Services, Nottinghamshire County Council
David Banks	Nottinghamshire	Support Officer
Julie Plant	Staffordshire	PCP Support Officer
Sue Morgan	Suffolk	Head of Democratic Services, Suffolk County Council
Councillor Trevor Egleton	Thames Valley	PCP Chairman; Buckinghamshire County Council
Clare Gray	Thames Valley	Committee Adviser to Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel, Buckinghamshire County Council
Robin Verso	Warwickshire	PCP Vice-Chair; Independent Member
Bob Malloy	Warwickshire	PCP Independent Member
Suzanne O'Leary	West Mercia	Head of Overview and Scrutiny, Worcestershire County Council, supporting West Mercia PCP
Councillor Brian Wilcox	West Mercia	PCP Member; Hereford City Council
Councillor John O'Shea	West Midlands	PCP Member; Birmingham City Council
Emma Williamson	West Midlands	PCP Support Officer; Birmingham City Council
Councillor Richard Britton	Wiltshire	PCP Chair; Wiltshire Council
Councillor Andrew Bennett	Wiltshire	PCP Member; Swindon Borough Council
Emily Higson	Wiltshire	PCP Support Officer; Wiltshire Council

Contact details

Contact us

Ann Reeder
 Director, Frontline Consulting Associates
E ann@frontlineconsulting.co.uk
M 07903 964812

Tim Young
 Lead on Policing and Crime
E timy@frontlineconsulting.co.uk
T 020 8904 2815
M 07985 072979

Twitter: @PCPsdirect.

Web: www.frontlineconsulting.co.uk

Web: www.pcps-direct.net

Paul Grady
 Head of Police, Grant Thornton
E paul.d.grady@uk.gt.com
T 0207 728 3196

Iain Murray
 Deputy Head of Police, Grant Thornton
E iain.g.murray@uk.gt.com
T 0207 383 4715

Twitter: @GrantThorntonUK

Web: www.grantthornton.co.uk





This publication reports on the findings of the fourth annual conference for police and crime panels organised by Frontline Consulting Associates. The conference took place in Nottingham on Friday 3 July 2015.

The conference theme was 'Facing the future'. For participants at the conference, the key challenge was how the police service would adapt over the next five years, given the prospect of continued austerity across almost all parts of the public sector – and the panels' own role in tackling this challenge.

This conference report provides insights into the work of a wide range of police and crime panels, examples of

innovation and proactive challenge and support of police and crime commissioners by PCPs. It also suggests future ways of working including increased collaboration and use of partnerships and alliances to meet the challenges of policing and to develop further policing accountability.

Frontline Consulting was set up in 2007 to support councillors and provide consultancy, learning and development in local government. It now works across the public sector and manages the Non-Executive Academy.

Frontline Consulting has worked with two thirds of the PCPs in England and Wales, delivering induction, development workshops, reviews and conferences.

www.frontlineconsulting.co.uk and
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