



Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel: Annual Report 2014

Foreword

In 2011 Britain's coalition government introduced the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act providing for the election of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to replace Police Authorities in each force area.

The force area for Cambridgeshire Constabulary covers the local authority areas of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; for the purposes of this report the area is known collectively as Cambridgeshire.

On 15 November 2012 Sir Graham Bright was elected Cambridgeshire's first PCC.

The Act also created Police and Crime Panels (PCPs) to exercise oversight of the Commissioners' work. This first Annual Report of Cambridgeshire's Police and Crime Panel, describes the background work undertaken in setting up the Panel, the work carried out in the first eighteen months of its existence and the plans for the future.

The people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough can be reassured that, acting on their behalf, the Panel is committed to exercising its statutory duties of holding the Commissioner to account for the delivery of his Police and Crime Plan and supporting him by adding value to his work wherever possible.

The Panel's evolution

In order to assist in developing the panel in accordance with legislation and, importantly, within the spirit of the legislation officers representing all the local authorities, The outgoing Police Authority, Community Safety Partnerships and Constabulary worked with members to develop a shadow panel in order that the panel developed in accordance with the details of the legislation and the spirit of the legislation.



During these meetings it was agreed that Peterborough would provide officer support as the 'lead authority'.

The work of officers and the shadow panel included identifying panel membership in accordance with the legislation, adopting a process to recruit two independent co-opted members, draft terms of reference, rules of procedure and setting a proposed meeting and scrutiny schedule.

In accordance with the legislation officers had to seek Home Office approval to set the elected member numbers at eleven in order to achieve the required political balance; supplemented with the two independent members this resulted in a panel comprising thirteen members.

The shadow panel met on three occasions between September and November 2012, meeting for the first time as a full panel in December 2012. The Panel agreed a meeting schedule of four panel meetings a year plus an annual general meeting. All Panel meetings are held in public.

The Panel's overall responsibility is to scrutinise and support the work of the Commissioner, specifically:

- To review the PCC's Police and Crime Plan
- To hold the PCC to account for the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan – the panel has powers to request any necessary information from the PCC on his decisions
- To review and report on the appointment of the Chief Constable and other senior appointments – the Panel has powers to veto the appointment of the Chief Constable
- To review the Commissioner's proposed police precept – the panel has powers to veto the precept
- To scrutinise the PCC's annual report
- To consider complaints against the PCC.

Work to April 2014

Since its inception, the Panel has met on eight occasions.

One of its first roles was to confirm the appointment of a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and it did so in November 2012, with the result that Mr Brian Ashton serves in that role.

It has now scrutinised the precept for the financial years 2013-14 and 2014-15.

The Panel has scrutinised the Medium Term Financial Plan 2013-17.

It has approved the Police and Crime Plan and a number of working variations thereof.

It has negotiated and agreed a Protocol defining the working relationship between the PCC and PCP.

A procedure for handling complaints has been agreed and scrutinising complaints as a standing agenda item has been agreed,

The Commissioners first Annual Report and Performance Framework have both been reviewed.

The Panel has received reports on the Commissioners Engagement and Communications Plan, the Collaboration arrangements between Forces, Victim Services planning and the costs associated with the Commissioner's functions.

The minutes of these meetings can be found on the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime website at: <http://democracy.peterborough.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=543&Year=0>

The next twelve months

The panel have been alive to some helpful review work carried out in relation to the operation of Panels nationally, in particular the review carried out by the Centre for Public Scrutiny; 'Police and Crime Panels: the first year'.

Since its inception the panel has met its legislative requirements. It now wants to move forward and has agreed an agenda for the next twelve months that will add an additional level of scrutiny to the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan and the pledges he made on appointment. Therefore, from June 2014 the following Policing Plan priorities will scrutinised in depth by theme at each meeting:

- Maintaining local police performance
- Delivering Policing within the available budget
- Continuing to tackle crime and disorder
- Keeping People Safe
- Community engagement.

The nature of local government and democracy means that almost annually there will be changes to the membership of the panel. The panel arrangements put in place over the last eighteen months, and the desire to be more proactive in its scrutiny, place the panel in a good place to minimise the disruption of any such changes.

Conclusion

The Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel is now actively carrying out its role and a fully developed, constructive working relationship with the Commissioner is in place.

The Panel has a vital role to perform in exercising, on behalf of the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the 'checks and balances' envisaged in the legislation.

Residents can be assured that members of the Panel will apply themselves diligently to performing their part in ensuring a sustainable and effective police force and combating crime and disorder.

About the Panel

The Panel comprises the current membership:

- Councillor Mac McGuire (Chairman) (Cambridgeshire County Council)
- Councillor Jason Ablewhite (Vice Chairman) (Huntingdonshire District Council)
- Councillor Tom Hunt (East Cambs District Council)
- Councillor Michael Shellens (Cambridgeshire County Council)
- Councillor Ben Shelton (South Cambs District Council)
- Councillor David Oliver (Fenland District Council)
- Councillor Lewis Herbert (Cambridge City Council)
- Councillor Peter Reeve (Cambridgeshire County Council)
- Councillor Julia Davidson (Peterborough City Council)
- Councillor Michael Fletcher (Peterborough City Council)
- Councillor David Over (Peterborough City Council)
- Christine Graham (Independent Co-opted Member)
- Vacancy for Independent Co-opted Member