

Question/s for Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel

Meeting held on 30 July 2014

| | |
|---|--|
| Questioner | Richard Taylor |
| Questions addressed to which Member of the Panel | Question 1 - Chairman Question 2 - Chairman |
| Date Question was submitted | 23 July 2014 |

Question 1

At the last meeting of the panel I asked:

"Why are the Police and Crime Commissioner's replies to the Police and Crime Panel's requests for written responses to matters raised during panel meetings not routinely published by the panel and considered by subsequent panel meetings?"

Chairman Cllr McGuire' reply was:

"My response to that is that I understand a response was recorded in the minutes and was followed up in writing to the panel and I believe a written response was also conveyed to Mr Taylor".

This reply can be seen at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBlrJu14_zQ&t=25m22s

I note this element of the reply is not contained in the proposed minutes for the meeting held on the 19th of June 2014.

I would like to ask if the chairman, or acting chairman, still maintains that the responses from the commissioner were recorded in the minutes as he claimed, or if on reflection he agrees they were not?

The fact a response was received was recorded in the minutes; but the response itself was not and it was clear my question related to the substance of the commissioner's responses.

I note this was the question I was in the process of putting as a supplementary question to the panel when the panel abruptly terminated the public question slot before the question could be put and a response provided.

I had pointed the panel to my successful Freedom of Information Act request for two of the Commissioner's written responses and noted I had received the information; rather than being given a refusal on the grounds of the information being already published as I would have expected had the responses actually been proactively published by the panel as claimed. The FOI request can be viewed at:

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/police_and_crime_commissioners_w

I note that while the chairman noted the panel's terms of reference could be amended to require the proactive publication of written responses to the panel from the Police and Crime Commissioner that amendment is not one of those included in the papers for the July 2014 panel meeting.

I see the proposed minutes for the 19th of June 2014 meeting include a statement that "Written responses to the Panel would also be published on the website". While this statement was not made at the meeting, if that is the intent of the panel I suggest including such a statement within the rules of procedure. I note I suggested that the panel considers the responses from the commissioner at subsequent meetings of the panel.

I am disappointed the proposed amendments to the rules of procedure before the panel do not include extending the scope of the public questions agenda item to allow members of the public to make statements and in particular to enable members of the public to suggest items for the panel to scrutinise.

Answer

The Panel did receive a response in writing from the Police and Crime Commissioner and this was noted in the action update section of the 5 February 2014 minutes. It was subsequently published under F.O.I.

The Panel agree with Mr Taylor and will amend the Rules of Procedure and publish follow up responses received in writing from the Police and Crime Commissioner that are requested to matters raised during meetings of the Panel. An amendment to the Rules of Procedure at section 12.0, 'PCC and others giving account' will be made to reflect this.

Regarding the Public Questions agenda item and extending the scope to allow members of the public to make statements and in particular to enable members of the public to suggest items for the panel to scrutinise.

I believe this is already covered in the Rules of Procedure but just to be absolutely clear additional wording will be added at section 8, 'Work Programme' of the Rules of Procedure.

The Panel thank you for highlighting these areas for consideration.

Question 2

I would like to ask the chairman or acting chairman, what the recommendations of the panel's working party which met on 15 May 2014 were and if they will be formally reported to the panel?

I note a member of the working party, Cambridge representative Cllr Tim Bick published an expectation that "some focused scrutiny sessions" would be recommended by the working party to the panel:

<https://twitter.com/CllrTimBick/status/474494359841566720>

I was surprised not to see a series of proposals for the proactive scrutiny of aspects of the Commissioner's work which the commissioner has not volunteered to report to the panel for scrutiny put to the June 2014 meeting of the panel.

Cllr Bick has suggested to the panel that call answering performance decisions might be one of the first subjects the panel wishes to proactively scrutinise given they were the first decisions the Police and Crime Commissioner reported to the public of Cambridgeshire even though the commissioner is yet to report any decisions on this subject to the panel for scrutiny.

I am interested in finding out if the Centre for Public Scrutiny was invited to take part in the working party as panel agreed they would be in March 2014 and what contribution, if any, they have made.

I note that had the working party been set up as a "task group" section 10.1 of the panel's rules of procedure would have required it to report back with a report and recommendations to the panel. I hope this loophole can be addressed when the rules of procedure are reviewed.

Given deciding what areas of the commissioners work ought be subject to detailed scrutiny is a key part of the panel's work I would rather such discussions take place in public at full panel meetings.

Answer

The working party was not a Task and Finish Group but an informal working party which met once on 15 May 2014 to discuss the agenda plan for 2014/2015 and consider items for scrutiny by the Panel. The Centre for Public Scrutiny was invited to attend but was unable to send someone on that particular date. However guidance was provided through phone conversations with an expert adviser from the CfPS. The outcome of the meeting is the current agenda plan that was presented at the Annual meeting on 19 June 2014.