

Bedford Borough Council-Full Council

16 October 2013

Report of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel

SUBJECT: BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL'S BI-ANNUAL REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report details the Panel's first bi-annual report. The purpose of this report is to provide the three top level Councils, Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton Borough with summary information on the activity of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel from its formation in summer 2012 to July 2013.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Full Council receives the bi-annual report of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel.**

3 IMPLICATIONS

Legal

- 3.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Policy

3.2 There are no policy implications arising from this report.

Risk

3.3 There are no risk implications arising from this report.

Resource

3.4 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

Environmental

3.5 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Equality

3.6 In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Panel's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

3.7 This activity has no relevance to the Panel's statutory equality duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. An equality analysis is not needed.

4 DETAILS

Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel Bi-annual Report:

4.1 Introduction:

The purpose of this report is to provide the three top level Councils, Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton Borough with summary information on the activity of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel from its formation in summer 2012 to July 2013.

Nine meetings of the Panel have taken place during the period covered by this report.

4.2 The Role and Responsibilities of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 introduced significant changes in police governance and accountability. The Act **replaced the former Police Authorities** with a **directly elected Police and Crime Commissioner** for each Police area and also required the **establishment of a Police and Crime Panel** for each Police area whose role is to scrutinise and hold the Commissioner to account as a 'critical friend'.

The Panel is a Joint Committee of Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Councils. Its membership comprises Councillors appointed by each of those three authorities and two Co-opted Independent Members.

Bedford Borough Council is the host local authority for the Panel and is responsible for providing administrative and other support to the Panel and its Members.

The Panel's functions are to:

⇒ review and report/make recommendations to the PCC in respect of his/her draft Police and Crime Plan and report/make recommendations to the PCC on his/her annual report;

- ⇒ review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, by the PCC in connection with the discharge of his/her functions and make reports or recommendations to the PCC with respect to the discharge of those functions;
- ⇒ review and report back to the PCC on appointments s/he proposes to make to the following posts:
 - the Commissioner's Chief Executive;
 - the Commissioner's Director of Finance;
 - the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner;
 - the Chief Constable.
- ⇒ review and report/make recommendations to the PCC on his/her proposed precept for the financial year;
- ⇒ review and report/make recommendations to the PCC on any proposal by him/her to call on the Chief Constable (CC) to retire or resign.

The Panel also has the power:

- ⇒ to suspend the PCC if s/he has been charged with an offence (in the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man) which carries a maximum term of imprisonment exceeding two years;
- ⇒ appoint an acting PCC where the incumbent PCC is incapacitated, resigns or is disqualified;
- ⇒ require the relevant PCC and members of his/her staff to attend before the Panel (at reasonable notice) to answer any questions that the Panel considers necessary in order to carry out its functions;
- ⇒ require the PCC to respond in writing within a reasonable period determined by the Panel, to any report or recommendation the Panel has made to the PCC.

Further details about the Panel's constitution and working arrangements are set out in the following documents, which are available on the Panel's website at the links below:

- ⇒ [Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel Arrangements](#)
- ⇒ [Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel Procedure Rules](#)

4.3 Arrangements, Procedures, Strategies and Plans

During the initial period of operation, a series of arrangements, procedures and strategies/plans were required to be put in place in order to help the Panel operate in a smooth and efficient way. These included:

⇒ [Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel Arrangements](#)

The Panel's Arrangements were considered and approved by the Panel at the 6 September 2012 meeting and subsequently by the three constituent Councils and the Panel has decided to review these arrangements at the 25 November 2013 meeting and any recommendations for change will be reported to the next available meetings of the constituent authorities for consideration.

⇒ [Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel Procedure Rules](#)

The Panel's Procedure Rules were also considered and approved by the Panel at the 6 September 2012 meeting, and the Panel has decided to review these arrangements at the 25 November 2013 meeting.

⇒ [Appointment of Independent Co-opted Members](#)

The Panel's membership is required by law to include two Co-opted Independent Panel Members. Following an open advertisement, as a result two Members were appointed at the 11 October 2012 meeting, for a period of four years from the date of the meeting.

⇒ [Protocol Governing the relationship between the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Police & Crime Panel, Including the Information Sharing Protocol and Media Protocol](#)

These Protocols were considered and approved by the Panel at the 4 December 2012 meeting, and are also due to be reviewed at the 26 September 2013 meeting.

⇒ [Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the conduct of the PCC](#)

These arrangements were approved by the Panel at the 4 December 2012 meeting where five members were also appointed to the Complaints Sub-Committee. This Sub-Committee will consider any recorded complaints against the PCC that will not be referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (the IPCC).

⇒ [The Panel's Improvement and Development Plan](#)

As part of the development of the Police and Crime Panel, Members identified the need for an Improvement and Development Plan to give a structure to the various ways it carries out its roles and responsibilities. As a result a draft Plan was produced for consideration by Panel Members at an informal workshop held on 28 February 2013. The modified plan was then considered and approved by members at the 30 April 2013 meeting. Progress against the actions identified will be reviewed regularly and further actions identified and included as necessary.

⇒ [The Panel's Communications Strategy](#)

An important part of the Panel's role is to communicate regularly the activity of the Panel to various audiences ranging from the general public to the Police and Crime Commissioner. As a result members decided to produce a Communications Strategy to give a structure and direction to the Panel's public relations activity. This Strategy was considered and approved by members at the 30 April 2013 meeting, and will be reviewed on an annual basis. Details of the activities carried out to date are included in section 5.5 of this report.

⇒ [Monitoring of the Panel's Recommendations](#)

The proposed processes which will ensure that any recommendations the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel (PCP) makes are recorded and followed up in a timely manner were considered and approved by the Panel at the 30 April 2013 meeting. This process was subsequently accepted by the PCC, and is now in use.

4.4 Panel Reports and Recommendations to the Commissioner

Once the arrangements, procedures and strategies detailed above were in place, then the Panel were able to embark on their role of scrutinising and holding the Commissioner to account.

Panel Members had the opportunity to exercise their role in relation to confirmation hearings very early on regarding the appointment of the [Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner](#)

The Panel carried out a confirmation hearing on 17 December 2012, which resulted in the Panel's unanimous confirmation of the appointment of Tafheen Sharif as the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire.

The Panel's report also made a number of other recommendations which the Panel considered would help strengthen and underpin the Deputy Commissioner's role and the support that the role could provide to the Commissioner. The Commissioner generally welcomed these suggestions. Details of the recommendations and the Commissioner's responses are available in a [report](#) submitted to the 24 July 2013 Panel meeting.

In February 2013 the Panel scrutinised the Commissioner's [Draft Police and Crime Plan](#) and the proposed [Precept](#).

The Panel was prepared to support the draft plan as submitted, acknowledging that the limited time available in which to produce this initial plan so that it could inform the Commissioner's budget for 2013/14, meant that it contained less detail than either the Commissioner or the Panel would ordinarily wish to see.

In expressing its support, the Panel asked however that once discussions with the Chief Constable to agree the framework for assessing performance against the Plan had been concluded, the proposed framework be submitted to the Panel for its consideration. This was considered at the 30 April 2013 meeting

Regarding the Precept, the Panel decided not to propose any changes, and did not exercise its power to veto the proposed precept. The report produced by the Panel advised the Commissioner that the Panel supported the proposed precept for 2013/14 as submitted.

More recently the Panel has carried out a confirmation hearing for the appointment of the new [Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police](#).

On 24 May 2013 the Panel's Secretariat received formal notification of Ms Paul's proposed appointment. By law the Panel is required to hold a confirmation hearing (a meeting of the Panel held in public at which the candidate for appointment is requested to appear for the purpose of answering questions relating to that appointment) in sufficient time to enable it to submit its report and recommendations in respect of the appointment to the Commissioner within 3 weeks of the day on which it received notification.

The confirmation hearing into this appointment was held at 3.00pm on Tuesday 4 June 2013 at Borough Hall, Bedford, and the Panel's report, subsequent to this hearing, recommended that Colette Paul be appointed Chief Constable of Bedfordshire.

A detailed [report](#) containing all the recommendations made to date to the Commissioner and full details of his responses was submitted to the 24 July 2013 Panel meeting.

This showed that of the 12 recommendations made to the Commissioner, 11 have been accepted and implemented.

4.5 Communications Strategy

The Panel's Communications Strategy (Available at this [page](#) of the Panel's website) was approved by the Panel at the 30 April 2013 meeting, and is being progressively implemented.

The objectives of the Communications Strategy are two-fold:

- ⇒ To raise the level of key stakeholder and general public awareness of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel, its role in the new governance arrangements for policing and community safety and its membership.
- ⇒ To publicise the ongoing work of the Panel and the recommendations it makes to the Commissioner so that the public and partners know what the Panel is doing and the opportunities that are available for them to contribute to and help shape its work.

The following Communications Tools are being used by the Panel:

⇒ [Panel webpages](#)

As host authority Bedford Borough Council provides dedicated web pages which provide information for the public on:

- The role of the Police and Crime Panel
- Panel membership and contact details
- Panel meetings and agendas, reports and minutes
- Panel reports to the Commissioner
- Panel Press Releases
- The role of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Complaints

The Panel's website, www.bedford.gov.uk/bedspcp, is maintained regularly to ensure it is an up to date knowledge base for the public to access. There is close co-operation and links with the PCC's office to ensure consistent channels of communication with the public.

⇒ **Panel Reports to the Commissioner**

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 requires the Panel to make written reports and recommendations to the Commissioner on the following:

The proposed precept for any year

The proposed Police and Crime Plan and any proposed variations

The Commissioner's Annual Report

The outcome of confirmation hearings for the positions of Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Chief Constable.

Details of the Panel reports to the Commissioner are contained in section 4.4 of this report.

⇒ **Press releases**

Press releases are a key means of making the public aware of the Panel and its work and the activity of the Panel has been publicised with the following Press releases:

[Panel meets PCC for the first time 6 Dec 12](#)

[Panel's support for Deputy PCC's appointment 21 Dec 12](#)

[Panel's support for Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan 8 Feb 13](#)

[Confirmation Hearing with proposed new Chief Constable 28 May 13](#)

[Panel's support for Chief Constable's appointment 7 Jun 13](#)

In support of the Press Releases, the social media website "[Twitter](#)" is used for additional publicity.

There is good liaison between the PCC's office and the Panel in ensuring that communication material is consistent from both bodies, and that where appropriate it is issued simultaneously. An example of this was the confirmation hearing for the new Chief Constable (See Press Release dated 7 June 2013 above).

4.6 Conclusion

The first year of operation of the Panel has been very much a year of developing an understanding of the Panel's role and relationship building with the PCC's office. Panels across the Country have experienced similar processes.

In Bedfordshire the Panel has been particularly proactive in carrying out and developing their role, as demonstrated by a recent "Away Day".

This day was attended by Panel members as well as the Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioner. As well as further developing the relationship with the Commissioner, agreement was reached on ways the Panel could assist the Commissioner as a "critical friend" in developing his future strategies. **This agreement includes looking at certain key areas of pre-scrutiny starting with the Estates Strategy of Bedfordshire Police.**

The Panel now looks forward to working closely with the Commissioner in order to assist in providing the best possible Policing Service to the people of Bedfordshire.