

Bedford Borough Council-Full Council

15 July 2015

Report of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel

SUBJECT: BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL'S ACTIVITY REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the three Unitary Councils, Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton Borough with summary information on the activity of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel from May 2014 to April 2015.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Full Council receives the Activity 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 Activity Report:

4.1 Introduction:

The purpose of this report is to provide the three Unitary Councils in Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton Borough with summary information on the activity of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel from May 2014 to April 2015.

The following table details the Panel/Panel related activities that have taken place during this period.

Activity	May 14 to Apr 15
1. Formal Panel meetings	5
2. Complaints Sub-Committee Meetings	1
3. Panel Task Group Meetings	9
4. Panel training/workshop sessions	3
5. External conferences	1
N.B. Activities 1, 3, and 4 can be attended by all Panel Members, activity 2 involves five Members, whilst activity 5 is for one or more Members.	

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'. An important distinction from the former Police Authority's role is that the Panel does not have responsibility for holding the Chief Constable to account. That responsibility rests with the Commissioner. As a consequence, the Panel does not consider matters relating to operational policing which are properly the responsibility of the Chief Constable and for which she is held to account by the Commissioner.

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 Panel Arrangements and Procedure Rules, which are available on the [Panel's website](#).

4.3 Arrangements, Procedures, Strategies and Plans

The Panel has a series of arrangements, procedures and strategies/plans which are in place in order to help the Panel operate in a smooth and efficient way. These are monitored on a regular basis to ensure they continue to meet requirements and the following were reviewed during the period covered by this report:

Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel Arrangements

At the 25 November 2014 meeting the Panel agreed that no changes were necessary to the Arrangements.

Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel Procedure Rules

Also at the 25 November 2014 meeting the Panel agreed that no changes were necessary to the Procedure Rules.

Protocol Governing the relationship between the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Police & Crime Panel, including the Information Sharing Protocol and Media Protocol

At the 3 September 2014 meeting these Protocols which had been updated to reflect the current operation of the Panel were reviewed and it was agreed that amended Protocols be adopted and be reviewed again after a further year of operation.

Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the conduct of the (D)PCC

The initial handling of complaints is dealt with by the Monitoring Officer of Bedford Borough Council (in their capacity as Monitoring Officer to the Panel) and the arrangements which have been put in place mean that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee are made aware promptly of all complaints about the conduct of the (D)PCC and consulted on the action taken to deal with them.

These arrangements were reviewed at the 15 April 2015 meeting and the Panel decided that no changes were necessary.

4.4 Panel Reports and Recommendations to the Commissioner

At every meeting the Panel receives an update report from the Commissioner on his activity, including the reporting of any strategic decisions made. This gives the Members an opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the Commissioner as he carries out his regular duties.

At the 14 July 2014 meeting the Panel received the [Commissioner's Annual Report](#).

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire provided the Panel with an overview of performance for the year 2013/14 of both Bedfordshire Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire.

Information was provided on Force performance against the priorities set out in the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan 2013 in relation to:

- Crime Reduction/Crime Detection
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Victim Satisfaction
- Financial Outturn
- Annual Governance Statement
- Complaints.

The Panel expressed concern that, although there were a number of statistics provided in relation to complaints, there was not a separate category for Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in the Complaints statistics. In addition, more data was requested on the number of contacts made against the number of complaints received.

The Panel noted that there were three channels of communication through the Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) which helped improve the trust and confidence of Bedfordshire's diverse communities in the Police service.

In April 2014 the Ministry of Justice had invited Police and Crime Commissioners to compete for additional funding to help support victims of crime. The results of the competitive process had recently been announced and the Panel expressed its disappointment that Commissioner Martins was not one of the Commissioners who had secured a portion of the £12.5m fund available. The reason given for this was that not all of the criteria for the application had been met.

At the 3 September 2014 meeting the Panel received the [HMIC report 'Responding to Austerity' – Bedfordshire Police](#).

The HMIC report stated that it was encouraged by the progress Bedfordshire Police was making in achieving its required savings. In addition, the Force had ambitious plans for improving policing in Bedfordshire in the future and achieving good value for money. However, the Force faced some significant challenges in the short-term. The Force now needed to implement its ambitious plans for improving policing in Bedfordshire in an affordable way more quickly and in so doing ensure that policing services to the public remained effective. The Panel noted the report.

At the same meeting the Panel received a report on [Crime Reduction Initiatives in Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable](#). In discussing this the Commissioner reported that Bedfordshire Police employed a Decision Making Model that underpinned its core purpose of fighting crime and protecting the public. This Model ensured that:

- Routine proactive analysis was undertaken in order to identify crime patterns, series and trends;
- A threat/harm/risk assessment was undertaken to determine the level of response needed;
- Both police and other partner responses were considered;
- Options were weighed up in terms of the Force's priorities and the outcomes that needed to be achieved; and
- The most appropriate action was taken, and this action was recorded and its impact reviewed.

The Panel questioned the Commissioner over the strategy and in response to a comment that, whilst burglary was down, violent crime was on the increase, the Commissioner suggested that this was due, in some part, to recording standards. He also commented that some of the more serious incidents of rural crime were likely to be linked to organised crime. Members questioned whether the crime reduction initiatives were working because they believed that crime rates in Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable were increasing.

Also at this meeting the Panel received an update on progress of the **Police and Crime Plan**, and considered the latest **Force Performance statistics**.

At the [12 November 2014](#) meeting the Panel noted an update on the implementation of the recommendations made in the report of the Estates Strategy of Bedfordshire Police. The Panel questioned the Commissioner on the timescale for relocation of Police Stations, and the Commissioner advised that this was driven by being able to find suitable premises. It was his intention to have a more visible patrol within budget restraints. A further report is scheduled for the July 2015 meeting of the Panel.

At the same meeting the Commissioner reported on the findings of the **HMIC Inspection into the effectiveness of policing activity in Bedfordshire** in relation to crime prevention, police response to incidents and crimes and freeing up police time.

The inspection had identified that the Bedfordshire Force did not have an overarching crime prevention strategy but it did have a crime reduction strategy. This appeared to be separate from other parts of the organisation rather than an embedded activity across all areas of policing. The HMIC had found some good examples where the Force had undertaken long-term crime prevention initiatives. Although the Force had a database which helped officers and staff to solve problems and support neighbourhood crime prevention activity, it was not being used effectively.

The Panel questioned the Commissioner and were advised that both Special Police Officers and Warranted Officers were deployed into areas of high preventative crime, and that the PCSOs already had all of the powers they were permitted to have. As they did not have the power of arrest they were able to have a different relationship with the public.

Concern was expressed by a Panel Member that PCSOs seemed to be the only presence in the rural areas. In response, Commissioner Martins advised that, in general, rural areas had less crime than the urban area but the PCSOs were able to call for back up whenever necessary.

Also at the same meeting Members were given information on the **Medium Term Resource Strategy** and preliminary details of the **2015/16 budget planning process**, as well as considering the latest **Force Performance statistics**.

At the [5 February 2015](#) meeting, Members invited the **Special Constabulary** to present to the Panel on the recruitment and roles of the “Specials”.

Members explored various aspects of the role of “Specials” and were given the following answers to questions:

- cybercrime was recognised as an issue and the Force was seeking to recruit a Special Officer with the necessary skills to address this;
- It could not be guaranteed that those recruited in rural areas would work in the area in which they lived as it was essential that training took place across a variety of different settings and environments to properly develop recruits’ skills and abilities;

- from a cohort of 80 Police Cadets at least 25% would be from vulnerable backgrounds. Not all cadets would be suitable to progress onto the Special Constabulary because of their vulnerabilities. However, any who wished to transfer were identified and would be given the appropriate training and support to achieve a smooth transition into the Special Constabulary.

The major item considered at this meeting was the consideration of the **Commissioner's Budget and Precept for 2015/16**.

With the prospect of continued cuts to Police Funding and with Bedfordshire Police facing a high serious crime mix equivalent to that of a large Metropolitan Force as opposed to a small rural Force, this would impact on the level of service that the Force could provide. Accordingly, the Commissioner proposed a Council Tax increase of 15.84% or £24.80 per annum for a Band D property.

The Commissioner advised the Panel that by doing this he would be able to increase the number of Police Officers by 100 during 2015/16 and sustain this for at least the next five years. Because of the time it would take to recruit these officers it would also give him the opportunity to substantially build up reserves putting the Force in a far more financially stable position through to 2020/21, compared to a 1.99% increase. A 1.99% increase in Council Tax would leave the Force in a precarious position during and beyond 2018/19 in delivery of its frontline service to the public.

The Panel questioned the Commissioner at length and then decided not to veto the Precept. The Panel resolved:

- (1) That the Panel understands the funding difficulties facing Bedfordshire Police and notes the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposals to overcome this;
- (2) That the Police and Crime Commissioner be requested to produce a plan which will convince the public to support the proposals, including the improved performance he expects to deliver with the increased number of officers;
- (3) That, in the event that the referendum supports the increase, the Police and Crime Plan is amended to reflect those revised targets.

At this meeting the Panel also considered the latest **Force Performance statistics**.

The Panel continues to monitor the progress of their recommendations made to the Commissioner and received update reports at the [14 July 2014](#) and [5 February 2015](#) meetings.

For the period covering this report 23 (88%) out of the 26 recommendations made have been accepted, and since the inception of the Panel 48 (91%) out of 53 recommendations have been accepted.

At the [15 April 2015](#) meeting, the three Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in Bedfordshire were invited to discuss their roles and how the Panel could assist in driving forward community safety improvements across the County.

Members noted that CSPs worked across borders and joint meetings with Commissioner Martins had taken place, and that Bedfordshire Police Force Control Strategy took account of the CSP priorities. There was also a strong match between the CSP Priorities, the Force Control Strategy and the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan.

The Panel and the Chairs of the Partnerships agreed that the meeting had been very useful and as a result the Chairs would be invited to attend a future Panel meeting.

Also at this meeting the Panel received an update on the recently introduced **Victims' Commissioning Process**. The Panel heard that from October 2014, Police and Crime Commissioners became responsible for locally commissioning most of the emotional and practical support services for victims of crime. This change was part of the Government's strategy to improve services for victims with the aim to put victims at the heart of the criminal justice system.

The Commissioner also advised that regarding the **Precept Referendum**, based on positive responses from the public, on 18 February 2015 he notified the three Local Authorities in Bedfordshire of his intention to raise the Police precept by 15.85%.

The Commissioner also gave an update of the **Staff Restructuring** at his office, stating that one of the main reasons for the restructure was to review and realign the management structure to provide clear reporting lines and accountabilities at all levels.

The Panel received a report on the **Provision for Public Questions at Panel meetings**. Members discussed the proposed framework for members of the public to ask questions at Panel meetings and agreed that the Panel Procedure Rules be updated to reflect this framework.

4.5 Panel Development

Members decided to carry out an informal Development Day in order to review the effectiveness of the Panel's work to date and to work on how to deliver a more successful work programme for the future. This was attended solely by Panel Members and was used to prepare suggested ideas for progression at the Away Day in October.

This Development Day and the informal Away Day were facilitated by a representative from Frontline Consulting who have worked with more than half the Police and Crime Panels in England and Wales as they have been developing their role of challenge and support to their Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Away Day was also attended by the Commissioner and his staff and there was general agreement that this forum presented an ideal opportunity to review the operation of the Panel and to plan for the future. Ideas developed at the Development Day were discussed at the Away Day.

Two of the main outcomes for the day were to enable more Panel involvement in the Budget planning process and to continue with the strategy of using Task and Finish Groups to give the Panel the opportunity to input into the policy review and development of the Commissioner.

4.6 Task and Finish Groups

The Task and Finish Group which had been established at the 6 February 2014 meeting to look at “Creating Confident Communities” (public perception of crime and addressing the perception gap) was continued throughout the period of this report.

Members identified many organisations and partners who they felt could make a positive contribution to the review, and as a result the Task and Finish Group heard from the following:

- ⇒ The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC);
- ⇒ The Chief Constable (CC);
- ⇒ Community Safety Partnership representatives from each of the three Unitary Bedfordshire Local Authorities;
- ⇒ The general public;
- ⇒ Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs);
- ⇒ Town and Parish Council Network for Bedford Borough;
- ⇒ Town and Parish Council Conference for Central Bedfordshire;
- ⇒ Luton Ward Forums;
- ⇒ Neighbourhood Watch;
- ⇒ Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BMEs);
- ⇒ Faith Groups;
- ⇒ Elected Members from across Bedfordshire;
- ⇒ Editors of local media;
- ⇒ Youth Parliament;
- ⇒ Victim Support;
- ⇒ The Police Force’s school liaison officer.

Due to the magnitude of this project Members decided to plan it over the municipal year and the final report was considered by the full Panel at their 5 February 2015 meeting.

The Commissioner accepted all the recommendations in the report, and the Panel looks forward to hearing how the implementation of the recommendations will make a difference in the communities of Bedfordshire.

4.7 Communications Strategy

The Panel's Communication Strategy was reviewed by the Panel at the 14 July 2014 meeting, and continues to be 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 is publicised with Press releases as appropriate.

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.

4.8 Conclusion

The Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel continues to work in close co-operation with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

This is demonstrated by the use of the annual informal Away Days, which have resulted in continuing the programme of Task and Finish Groups whereby the Panel is playing an important role in assisting the policy review and development of various of the Commissioner's strategies.

In addition the Panel is being pro-active in carrying out the statutory roles of effectively scrutinising the budget and precept, and the Commissioner's Annual Report as well as holding the Commissioner to account over the various reports on the performance of Bedfordshire Police from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.

This co-operation continues to add real value to the role of the Panel in working closely with the Commissioner in order to assist in providing the best possible Policing Service to the people of Bedfordshire.

5 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

5.1 Not Applicable for this report

6 WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

6.1 Not applicable for this report

Report Contact Officers: Hugh Bartos, Beds PCP Support Officer,
Bedford Borough Council.

File Reference: None
Previous Relevant Minute(s): Not applicable
Background Papers: None
Appendices: None.