



Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire and  
Luton Borough Council

# **Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel**

## **Activity Report 2015/16**

Issued: April 2016

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### **1.1 Foreword from the Chair**

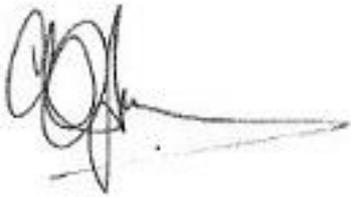
The purpose of this report is to provide the three Unitary Councils in the Bedfordshire Police Force Area, with summary information on the activity of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel over 2015/2016 municipal year.

During the first few meetings of the Panel dating back to the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners in 2012 there was considerable uncertainty about the role of the Panel and how the duties of challenging and supporting the Commissioner would be carried out in practice. Therefore I would like to thank the Panel's host Authority (Bedford Borough Council) and Central Bedfordshire and Luton Councils for their support for the Panel's work. This appreciation also extends to the Community Safety Partnerships in the County.

Likewise I thank the Panel Members who, with the support of the Commissioner's office, have applied themselves with great vigour to the planning and execution of their duties.

As we come to the end of the period of office of the first Commissioner, I can say with confidence that Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel is, within its restricted powers, well embedded into its role and the delivery of its responsibilities of holding the Commissioner to account thereby helping to deliver the best possible Police service to the people of Bedfordshire.

As a Panel we will review and develop as necessary the work required following the Police and Crime Commissioner's election on 5 May 2016.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Fiona Chapman', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Cllr Fiona Chapman MBE  
Chair, Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel

## 1.2 Introduction:

The Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel comprised the following Members in 2015/2016:

### Bedford Borough Council

Councillor Alison Foster  
Councillor Sarah-Jayne Holland  
Councillor Mohammad Yasin

### Central Bedfordshire Council

Councillor Fiona Chapman (Chair)  
Councillor Amanda Dodwell  
Councillor Paul Downing  
Councillor Peter Hollick

### Luton Borough Council

Councillor David Agleby  
Councillor Mohammed Farooq (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Ayesgul Gurbuz

### Co-opted Independent Members

Mr Paul Cain  
Ms Rose Parkes

The following table details the Panel meetings/Panel related activities that have taken place during the 2015/2016 municipal year.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>May 2015 to March 2016</b>
1. Formal Panel meetings	5
2. Confirmation Hearings for senior staff of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner	2
3. Panel training/workshop sessions	2
4. External conferences	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 18 November 2015 meeting the Panel agreed that no changes were necessary to the Arrangements, save to update references to post titles.

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

Also at the 18 November 2015 meeting the Panel agreed that no changes were necessary to the Procedure Rules, save to update references to post titles and revised wording to reference all senior appointments in the confirmation hearing process.

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

At the 2 September 2015 meeting these Protocols were reviewed and it was agreed that they be adopted and be reviewed again after a further year of operation.

### 1.3 Panel Development

Members decided to carry out an informal Induction Day in July 2015 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 by existing and newly appointed Panel Members and provided a good basis for the new Members in performing and developing their role.

The Panel decided to scrutinise the Police and Crime Plan by focussing on particular commitments of the Commissioner, asking him to report on progress against these commitments through the year.

This Induction Day was facilitated by a representative from Frontline Consulting who have worked with more than half the Police and Crime Panels in England and Wales.

A questionnaire was also circulated to Panel Members to identify training requirements and areas of interest for the future work programme. As a result training on the Complaints Procedure and Panels' Role and Responsibilities is scheduled for June 2016, and details on the progress of the Domestic Abuse Action Plan was planned for inclusion in a Panel report for the meeting in March 2016.

Panel Members visited the Force Headquarters in October 2015. In addition to receiving a briefing on the Budget process Members were able to see the temporary custody suite and the control centre. They found the visit thought provoking and useful in helping to understand the day to day operation of the Force, and hope to be able to repeat the experience in the future.

Frontline Consulting have also facilitated the formation of a regional Police and Crime Panel network, which Bedfordshire PCP has now joined.

A Panel Member reported on his attendance at the trial meeting of the Eastern Region Network for Police and Crime Panels at the 4 February 2016 meeting of the Panel. The network would share information and experience, problem solve and collaborate as appropriate. Agendas would be created by the participants and would include a regional update based upon information provided and 'hot topics' of challenges to address across the Force areas.

He regarded the network as excellent and all seven Panels in the Eastern Region had agreed that they would like to join. However, not all Panels in the Region had formally approved their membership.

The first full meeting took place in early March 2016 and discussions took place on the recently completed Budget and Precept Scrutiny process, the Home Office Consultation on handling complaints against PCCs, and the Emergency Services Collaboration possibilities from the Policing and Crime Bill.

#### 1.4 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 [20 July 2015](#) meeting the Panel received the **Commissioner's Annual Report**

The report provided an overview of how the Force had delivered against the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan in 2014/15 and highlighted some of the challenges which faced policing in Bedfordshire over the coming years. The report also detailed activity and work undertaken by the Commissioner and his office to realise the ambitions of the Police and Crime Plan and deliver an effective and efficient police service to the people of Bedfordshire, preventing crime, supporting victims and increasing confidence.

In view of the Commissioner not having a Deputy Commissioner, the Panel expressed concern over who would take on the role of Commissioner should Commissioner Martins become incapacitated and unable to fulfil his elected role.

At the same meeting the Panel also noted the refreshed Police and Crime Plan, and received an update on the progress of the Estates Strategy.

A Panel Member expressed concern that there had been very little consultation with the Central Bedfordshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) prior to the publication of the draft refreshed Plan. It was suggested that the Commissioner should communicate more widely than only with the CSP Chairs.

In response, the Commissioner stated that this was a draft document for consultation. He advised that he attended most of the CSP Executive meetings and met with their Chairs on a regular basis and his refreshed Plan was based on discussions with them.

A Panel Member expressed his concern that the Estates Strategy had been approved in November 2013 and yet to date the only progress made had been the new custody suite and the closure of the cells in Greyfriars, Bedford (which had come about as a result of an inspection by her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC)). He pointed out that Greyfriars had a value in the region of £1.7 million and cost in the region of £600k per annum in upkeep.

Two Panel Members participated in the Home Office visit to Bedfordshire Police to look at the challenges faced by the Force and its funding position. The point had been made clearly that even if the review of central Government funding was favourable to Bedfordshire Police there would probably be less funds to allocate nationally. The Panel Members had responded that Bedfordshire Police should receive a fair share of the available budget.

At the [2 September 2015](#) meeting the Commissioner provided a follow up report relating to the Panel's Task and Finish Group review of "Creating Confident Communities". He detailed how he has addressed the ten recommendations made in the report, many of which centred around communications issues. The Panel noted that the development of the Bedfordshire Police Communications Strategy for 2015/2016, which provides strategic direction and accountability for the Force.

At the [18 November 2015](#) meeting the Panel challenged the Commissioner over his proposals to permanently switch on speed cameras along the Bedfordshire stretch of the M1 motorway. He responded that this was not his preferred way of raising revenue but he felt he had been put in a position where he had very little alternative other than to consider approaches such as the use of speed cameras.

Also at this meeting the Panel started to scrutinise the Commissioner's new Police and Crime Plan by asking for a report on several of the commitments contained in the Plan. The Panel noted the progress the Commissioner had made against six of his commitments.

The Panel also received a report on the Commissioner's reaction to the latest HMIC report on Police Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Legitimacy which rated the Force as requiring improvement. The Commissioner reported that there was a delay in the HMIC publishing their Inspection findings and by the time the reports were received they were often out of date. The Force had introduced its new operating model in June 2015 and this report did not reflect that fact as it still referred to the previous model.

The Panel continued the Budget Scrutiny process by receiving a presentation at the 18 November meeting. This followed an informal briefing for Members given when they visited the Force HQ in October. The Chief Officer – Finance and Business Support, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, reported that the 'old' funding formula had been in place between 2002 and 2013. It had not been properly implemented and Bedfordshire had suffered from the operation of damping in respect of that formula. This formula was extremely complex and the general consensus across Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners was that it needed to change.

The major item considered at the [4 February 2016](#) meeting was the **Commissioner's Proposed Budget and Precept for 2016/17**. Representatives from the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in Bedfordshire were invited to participate in the discussions. Both Central and Luton CSPs expressed concern over the effect that the proposed savings would have on the funding provided by the Commissioner to CSPs.

The Commissioner expressed his frustration at the competing need to protect the level of policing and vulnerable victims of crime and the need to make in excess of £11m savings across the term of the medium term financial plan.

The Panel supported the Commissioners proposals, and also resolved that the Commissioner be recommended to share with the three Bedfordshire Chairs of the Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) further details around the savings proposals for the coming years as referred to in the Commissioner's report and;

- (a) the extent to which these will impact on the partnership working with CSPs (and with their constituent members) and;
- (b) the resources to be applied to community policing activities and the protection from harm of the vulnerable (particularly missing and absent children, victims of domestic abuse and children at risk of sexual exploitation).

Two of the Commissioner's commitments from the Police and Crime Plan involve holding the Chief Constable (CC) to account. As a result the CC was invited to the 4 February 2016 meeting to give a report on the progress against these two commitments, thereby continuing the Panel's strategy of holding the Commissioner to account by scrutinising progress against a selection of his Crime Plan commitments at each of the Panel's meetings.

The Chief Constable reported that the level of Government funding for Bedfordshire Police was inadequate, and after a detailed discussion the Panel noted the progress made by Bedfordshire Police against Commitments 3 and 10 within the Police and Crime Plan.

Also at the February meeting the Commissioner reported on his reaction to and his proposed actions as a result of the assessment by the HMIC on 'how effective is the Force at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable and supporting victims' published in December 2015, which judged the Force as inadequate. He advised that the inspection had taken place shortly after the Force had introduced its new operating model in June 2015 and then described the processes and activities which had been put in place to address the issues highlighted in the report. The Panel supported the action taken to date.

At the [21 March 2016](#) meeting the Panel received an "end of term" report from the Commissioner covering his period of office from 2102 to 2016. He placed on record his appreciation of the support given to him by the Chief Constable and the Force as a whole, explaining that the level of service delivered during his tenure had been quite remarkable given that the Force had been reduced by 200 officers during that time.

Members questioned him over various aspects of his report, including:

- whether the interview process was a factor in few Black and Minority Ethnic applicants being appointed as police officers;
- market towns, as well as villages, needing to have a greater visible Police presence to reassure communities;
- incident response performance had been declining;
- the Force's response to victims when they first contact the Police;
- the lack of information in the report on progress towards the use of the Force's estate and facilities;
- why the Force was not performing in line with national figures.

The Panel noted the report.

At this meeting the Panel also received a report on the Commissioner's reaction to three further HMIC reports:

- "The depths of dishonour: Hidden voices and shameful crimes" (HMIC judgement: Not yet prepared);
- PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (HMIV overall judgement: Requires improvement);
- PEEL: Police legitimacy 2015 (HMIV overall judgement: Good).

Members noted that Thames Valley Police had written to all GPs in its area to raise awareness of honour based violence and the Commissioner undertook to do the same in Bedfordshire.

Members questioned whether areas of need had been examined closely and were informed that the Deputy Commissioner had written recently to all police officers regarding child sexual exploitation training.

In relation to effectiveness, a Member referred to the HMIC comment that the Force had some good examples of public engagement but needed to do more to understand and engage with communities across Bedfordshire and asked the Commissioner about the steps he was taking to engage more with rural communities. The Commissioner replied that there still some way to go to meet the expectations of those communities and that there simply were not enough officers to deliver community policing in the way that he would want.

Members asked what the Community Policing Team would look like under the new policing model. The Commissioner explained that he was unable confirm at this stage. Acknowledging that the public would not be reassured by that, he reminded Members that the low number of officers was the main reason for the inadequate community policing at present.

The Panel noted all the reports.

At this meeting the Panel also received reports on the provisional outturn Panel Budget to 31 March 2016, showing how the Home Office Grant was allocated, and on the recruitment process for the Co-opted independent Members, which the Panel agreed could progress over the summer period.

The Panel continues to monitor the progress of their recommendations made to the Commissioner. In the period from January 2015 to March 2016 the Commissioner has accepted 17 out of the total of 19 recommendations made to him by the Panel.

## 1.5 Complaints

The Panel has a responsibility to informally resolve non-criminal complaints about the conduct of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner as well as criminal complaints or conduct matters that are referred back to it by the Independent Police Complaints Commission. It has delegated responsibility for the handling of complaints to the Monitoring Officer of the host Authority (Bedford).

A Complaints Sub-Committee of the Panel has been established to consider any complaints that are referred to it by the Monitoring Officer

During the period covered by this report there have been no complaints that were referred to this Sub-Committee, and as a result it has not met.

## 1.6 Communications Strategy

The [Panel's Communication Strategy](#) was reviewed by the Panel at the 20 July 2015 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](http://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.

Links to the Panel's website are also available from [Central Bedfordshire](#) and [Luton Borough](#) Councils' websites as follows:

<http://centralbeds.moderngov.co.uk/mgOutsideBodyDetails.aspx?ID=836>

[http://www.luton.gov.uk/Community\\_and\\_living/crime-and-community-safety/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.luton.gov.uk/Community_and_living/crime-and-community-safety/Pages/default.aspx)

### ⇒ **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 1.4 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.

## 1.7 Conclusion

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

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.