

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CLEVELAND POLICE & CRIME PANEL

5 FEBRUARY 2014

REPORT OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND SECURITY MANAGER – SBC

PCC CONFERENCE - 12 NOVEMBER 2013 – LONDON

SUMMARY

The Local Government Association(LGA) hosted a Police and Crime Panel Conference on the 12th November, 2013. The aim of the conference was to assess what impact Police and Crime Panels had made after the first 12 months as well as identify and discuss any emerging issues.

Attached as appendix 1. Is a summary of the conference prepared by the LGA

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel note the content of the report.

DETAIL

1. Contributors to the conference highlighted challenge as a result of the short turnaround required to agree key actions such as the precept, Police and Crime Plan and overall management of the functions. This presented a steep learning curve to some panels and Commissioners and additional time would have enabled a smoother transition and may have improved the quality of some plans as well as manage expectations better in some areas.
2. There was a general feeling that four meetings per year is not enough and more meetings are required to deal with all the relevant matters. Some areas highlighted that the use of scrutiny task and finish groups provided additional meeting opportunities and were key to maintain continuity and deal with relevant issues.
3. Some areas highlighted challenges between Police and Crime Commissioners and their respective panels. In some cases there have been personality clashes and in others the political dynamic has been a barrier to progress. One common challenge that has affected a number of panels is timely and consistent information sharing between the panel and Police and Crime Commissioner. In some cases this has not been forthcoming and this has led to problems in relation to monitoring performance. There appears to be a challenge between access to strategic and operational information and reluctance in some force areas to panels having access to operational information.

There are some discrepancies surrounding the format in which information should be presented by PCC's in the majority of cases PCC's are not complying with the law in relation to the information they are publishing. More prescription is required into what information is being published by PCC's and how this is being done.

4. Scrutiny is a key development area in some areas this is good with supportive relationships being developed and in others there have been some accusations of 'political cozyness' between the Panel and PCC although there is no evidence to suggest that this has hampered progress. More proactive work is required from panels in relation to setting up task and finish groups and establishing standing subgroups such as budget. It was also highlighted that regular themed meetings should be established exploring the various areas of the Police and Crime Plan to gain a better understanding and open debate on the challenges ahead.
5. The importance of building relationships between the Police and Crime Panels and wider partners was highlighted. This will enable the panel to better understand how partners operate on the ground.

Resourcing

6. It was felt that the Home Office grant is not sufficient alone to run a Police and Crime Panel. In some areas this income has been supplemented through positive joint working. It was recommended by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CFPS) that each local authority in PCP areas should contribute an additional £2,000 p.a. to support the function and enable more scrutiny work to be carried out. It was noted that lead authorities are already contributing additional resource through scrutiny functions and the associated resources required to carry this out. Some concerns were raised that the Home Office could withdraw the grant made to PCP's, while there is no immediate risk of this there is also no long term commitment to resource.

Effectiveness

7. It was noted that in general panels were effective in carrying out their statutory duties although at this stage it was difficult to judge whether they have made a difference at a local level due to the fact panels are only one year old.
8. There are no plans to change the powers of panels although they could change at the next election. It is the view of the CFPS that two current powers take up a disproportionate amount of time and resource:
9. The resolution of complaints: CFPS believe that these take up a lot of time and resource with limited impact or outcome at the end. The long term view is that complaints could be taken out of the remit of panels and dealt with by the Ombudsman, although the panel should retain the oversight of the process.
10. Confirmation hearings: particularly in relation to the appointment of deputies. Hearings could also be particularly risky especially in the veto of Chief Constable appointments which could be career ending. It is felt that this process is more a matter for HMIC.

Payment of panel members

11. The issue of payment to panel members was raised and there were a varying range of views as well as a large difference in amounts paid to members. Some areas paid only expenses where as other areas such as West Yorkshire paid independent members £10,000 p.a. district member's allowances are set in line with local arrangements. Others paid only the Chair and Vice Chair such as Swindon and Wiltshire who pay theirs £5,000 and £2,500 respectively.

Publicity and connecting with the community

12. Generally meetings are not well attended by members of the community but some areas are looking at how best to use social media and web casting to engage with more residents. Brighton and Thames Valley both webcast and other areas are looking to use Twitter feeds more widely.

Commissioning

13. It was generally felt that there is a capacity gap in OPCC's in relation to commissioning due to the sums of money involved it is felt that there needs to be more expertise although this needs to be balanced against the need to reduce costs. HMIC are releasing a Value for Money Report on PCC offices in the near future although no release date was provided.

**Name of Contact Officer: Steven Hume
Community Safety and Security Manager
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Telephone Number – 01642 527610
E mail : steve.hume@stockton.gov.uk**