

Police and Crime Panels (PCP) Conference 12 Nov 13

David Stewart, Chair of Hants PC Panel and Claire Elliot, Manager of Association of West Yorkshire Authorities – One year on

Hants PCP

- find that providing questions in advance of mtgs does help with info flow
- looking at are the resources for the panel and whether more can be found
- key steps - working with OPCC, scrutinising the precept, further improving scrutiny, look at outcomes from police & crime plan
- have found LGA training helpful in thinking how we carry out our job including links with CS scrutiny committees in Hants
- challenges have been getting hold of info, triangulating info we get, managing complaints which take up time
- have protocols on complaints, general working practice, and a complaints sub-committee as well as a finance working group

West Yorkshire PCP

- pays allowances to its members, including Independent members who receive £10k
- calling for lifting of restrictions of not being able to discuss financial figures that are less than 3 months old in a public meeting
- one of few forces judged by HMIC that is struggling to make budget reductions so will be one area for scrutiny
- first impact on relationship with PCC was publication of the police and crime plan and lack of performance measures

Ed Hammond CfPS - what have PCPs learnt?

Results from research for the LGA over the summer - spoke to 37 panel officers and about half of panel chairs

- Some panel members as former Police Authority Committees see their new role on PCP as an extension of that former body - not all of them but it is a theme.
- Some potential accusations of 'political cosiness' between PCCs and Chairs of PCPs if of the same party. In majority of places there are good relations. In some very good by which mean supportive but challenging
- Problem with receiving timely and appropriate info from PCCs - getting better though. To scrutinise strategic decisions PCPs do need operational info
- Some PCCs having some problems in identifying key decisions that should be reported to PCPs. Research has shown that many PCCs aren't complying with regulations on publishing info
- Know of one area where a CSP scrutiny committee was looking to scrutinise the PCC, who has said it's not appropriate
- Disagreements have been over balance between scrutiny and support, and looking at strategic and operational matters
- PCP relationships with LA O&S functions still embryonic in many parts of country. Need to be building wider links with CSPs and community safety scrutiny
- Some PCPs producing Forward Plan of themes and topics to be discussed at various mtg dates. Very useful and helpful for PCCs in order to produce required info etc.
- Emerging ways of working - themed meetings, sub-committees and working groups are all being used by panels
- Interesting how PCCs work out what their office needs in terms of functions and skill sets. In the interim some LAs have been providing supplemented services to assist them

- Lots of concern that Home Office funding for panels will be cut. Is an ongoing commitment from them to fund over the CSR
- Effectiveness? Statutory bits yes. But looking at outcomes is less well developed
- Powers - No Home Office plans to change anything.
- But if there was to be a reduction of powers? Could be useful to look at complaints system and use of LG Ombudsman plus confirmation hearings over PCCs appointment of Deputies etc. Use of veto powers is problematic
- If there was to be increasing powers? – greater say in dismissal of Chief Constables and to have a referral power as with health scrutiny - but not sure how would work

Sample of questions from both above sessions - check twitter feed #pcpconf

- What is the desire and powers of PCPs to encourage PCCs to undertake training on equalities and diversity?
- How many PCPs make use of social media and webcast their meetings?
- Excluding members of public on increased sensitivity on operational policing?
- Use of 'public challenge mtgs' where Chair of Panel robustly questions PCCs in front of 'public audience'?
- Public engagement is important but the agenda and papers of PC Panels usually buried well deep in host auth website. Why?
- Allowances? Is this wise to impose a 2k allowance in period of austerity? No plans to impose - just a guideline to be considered individually by Panels
- Impact of allowances on other Scrutiny bodies especially HWB etc....?
- Complaints - any guidance on which complaints the PCC should take to Panel?
- Should PCCs take a pay reduction to permit payment of allowances to Panel members?
- PCPs were a compromise solution in order to get legislation on PCCs through parliament so are they really needed? But now we have them should we fully embrace?

Workshop sessions;

- Proactive Scrutiny – Sarah Hopkins, Community Safety and Partnership Manager, Plymouth City Council and Lead Officer for Devon and Cornwall PCP
- Scrutiny of chief constable suspension – Norman Norris, Chair of Lincolnshire PCP
- Holding an external body to account: lessons from overview and scrutiny – Tim Young, Frontline Consulting

Sarah Hopkins outlined her PCPs agreed scrutiny work programme as below;

TOPIC 1: HOW IS THE PCC IMPROVING COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC?

- The PCC's "Communications Strategy" – ask for it to come to the Panel?
- How is the PCC engaging with people across the peninsula? What different and innovative methods of communication have been considered?

TOPIC 2: HOW IS THE PCC DELIVERING THE OBJECTIVES IN HIS POLICE AND CRIME PLAN?

- Police and Crime Plan review of the first 6 months
- How is the Police and Crime Plan helping to deliver the priorities in the Peninsula Strategic Assessment
- Look at the PCC's delivery plan for Police and Crime Plan?
- Performance measurements – what is the progress against the performance framework and how will measurements align to and support the performance of partner agencies?

- What will the impact be on the delivery against all the priorities in the police and crime plan should there be a shift in operational resources towards dealing with other public order demands?
- Does the PCC recognise the impact that Welfare Reform may have on increases in crime - how will this impact on the Plan?
- How will the PCC ensure that the way in which the force works will achieve the strategic objectives in the police and crime plan? How has the PCC supported the Chief Constable in balancing rural/urban/coastal demands/areas of high priority?
- The PCC said he was committed to do more work/put more focus on domestic and sexual violence/ and developing a 'partnership' measure for this – what has he done/what will he be doing?
- The PCC has a plan which has priority areas including domestic abuse, youth crime, drug and alcohol misuse but has made cuts in funding allocated in these areas. How will the delivery of his plan address these issues with fewer resources?

TOPIC 3: HOW IS THE PCC MAKING COMMISSIONING DECISIONS AND WHAT ARE HIS FUTURE COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS?

- What are the PCC's future commissioning intentions and how is he gathering the information to decide on priorities.
- How has he used the 2% increase in the precept to effectively tackle crime and community safety across the force area?
- Local authorities have, in the main, made significant financial contribution to activities to for example, supporting victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault and tackling drugs and alcohol misuse and Youth Offending Services. How will he measure the impact of cuts to services
- The PCC offered to share with the Panel how he would assess the social value/impact of his commissioning decisions and make it a 'pillar of his commissioning approach')
- Will the PCC provide sufficiently early enough indications of his commissioning intent for 2014/15 in order to minimise disruption/enable continuation of valued services or time to decommission services with sufficient notice.

TOPIC 4: HOW IS THE PCC IMPROVING CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE ACROSS THE FORCE AREA?

- To include the '101' number and what measures have been taken to improve this service?

TOPIC 5: HOW IS THE PCC STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS AND SHOWING LEADERSHIP IN PARTNERSHIP WORKING?

- The PCC offered to do some joining up across eg CSPs/Local Criminal Justice Boards/Health & Wellbeing Boards – what has he done? How does he envisage managing attendance at such meetings, across the geographical area as he cannot attend every meeting.
- The relationship between the PCC and the Chief Constable – how is it working?
- Do different authorities scrutinise the PCC, other than the Panel?
- How is his relationship with other partnerships working?

TOPIC 6: HOW IS THE PCC ADDRESSING ISSUES OF INEQUALITY AMONGST COMMUNITIES OF GEOGRAPHY AND COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST ACROSS A LARGE DIVERSE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA?

- Ask to see the PCC's Equality and Diversity Framework
- Could the PCC advise how he has become more proactive in addressing crimes of prejudice as well as race/hate crime (eg those with learning disabilities, mate crime)
- How is the PCC promoting equality and respecting diversity by ensuring the police service responds effectively to the needs of all communities?

Home Affairs Select Committee: Police and Crime Commissioners

Terms of reference for Home Affairs Select Committee: Police and Crime Commissioners were provided to help inform LGA of the sector's views on submissions by 11th December.

- The effectiveness of commissioners in reducing crime and delivering effective police service within their police force area
- The role of commissioners in holding their chief constables to account
- The role of police and crime panels in holding their commissioner to account
- The division of functions and staff between commissioners and chief constables following Stage 2 transfers under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
- The role of commissioners in budget and precept setting
- The effectiveness of commissioners in promoting local policing priorities
- Progress on establishing collaboration agreements with other commissioners, policing organisations and partners
- Transparency of and reporting by commissioners to date

In particular the LGA is looking for responses around 4 themes shown below with 'post it notes' submitted on the day. If anyone is going to make a submission or indeed wishes to contribute to the LGA submission could they please contact Eamon Lally

Eamon.lally@local.gov.uk

Powers

Do Panels need more powers?

- A requirement on PCCs to produce a forward plan?
- A definition of a key decision?
- Stronger powers in relation to the suspension of Chief Constables?
- Power of referral to the Home Secretary?

Definitely more powers needed. Not sure what would be achieved by referral to Home Secretary though.

This would be very useful

Budget Scrutiny

Essential to have info asap & to embrace expertise in scrutiny process.

Some panels have already begun to receive background papers relating to 2014/15 budget setting.

In Kent we are working with the PCC and have been invited to a special meeting in December to explore options.

“A substantial minority of panels have resigned themselves to seeing partial information very late in the day [January and February]”

PCPs: one year on, CfPS

This issue was also discussed in detail at our last meeting this month.

Panels need to have background briefing to understand the budget options which the PCC has considered.

Resources

“The wide range of professional expertise required] suggests that it will be difficult to provide adequate support to Panels within the existing funding envelope”

Lack of appreciation of the significance of panels both inside Loc. Gov. and with public.

The role of chairman is particularly challenging when embracing different authorities.

“Even an additional £2,000 per council would...make it easier for Panels to take a more forensic, strategic and proportionate approach to their activities”

Police and Crime Panels: the first year, CfPS

This is a good idea as I feel this would allow additional resources to help PCP do a more effective job.

Independent members need to be paid an allowance. Otherwise able people will not be attracted.

Independent members of PCP should be paid.

In West Mercia we have 10 local authorities and there is no agreement to increase the resources available for the PCP.

The additional burden will fall to local authority officers within existing posts.

Not yet seen how the existing allowance is spent. Some comparative stats on this would be helpful.

Challenging times; important to prioritise. Look where value can be best added.

Creative combining of roles.

Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officers joint role.

Information

“A minority of Panels have found it difficult to get information from the PCC”.

We have only just received the Plan!

“The lack of supporting information has made it difficult to discern where PCC decisions do, or don't relate to the Police and Crime Plan.”

I feel there were a few teething issues in Kent but things are getting better as Chief of Staff appointed so info flow better.

Police and Crime Panels the First Year, CfPS

How does the PCC hold the Chief Constable to account? The Panel needs the info the PCC uses for that purpose to determine if the PCC is doing the job properly.

Similarly for the PCC's task of creating an efficient & effective police force.

Confirmation Hearings

- Value potentially lies in the ability of the Panel to define expectations, on behalf of the public, about a clear and transparent process, robustly applied and subject to scrutiny.
- Avoid duplication on selection process itself.
- Having enabled challenging questions to be put and reassurance given that selected candidate would be good for the area.

N. Wales PCP

We are so fortunate in:

1. The relationship between PCP & PCC; healthy excellent working relationship.
2. PCP members are completely respectful of each other despite language, culture & political differences.
3. Openness & transparency is high on our agenda.
4. All members of PCP are equal.
5. Nolan Principles adhered to.
6. Excellent, experienced support staff from Host authority.