

SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel
2.	Date:	19 th November 2014
3.	Title:	Learning Lessons and the Way Forward for the Police and Crime Panel
4.	Organisation:	RMBC – Host Authority

5. Summary

At the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel held on 29th October 2014, following a number of public questions that fell broadly under the heading of “learning the lessons from recent events” it was agreed to consider them all at a reflective meeting on the 19th November. This paper seeks to summarise some of the key issues the Panel may wish to consider during this discussion.

6. Recommendations

That the Panel consider all of the items raised for discussion and highlighted in section 7 of this report.

7. Proposals and detail

Following the events of the last few months the Panel have agreed that an open discussion around lessons to be learnt is now appropriate. This report seeks to outline the key issues for consideration by the Panel during these discussions.

On the positive side, it is clear that the Panel played its full part in ensuring that the voice of the public and, more importantly, the voices of the victims and their families were heard. Indeed, this was clearly instrumental in the final decision of the previous Police and Crime Commissioner to resign.

Public interest in the work of the Panel has been generated as a result of these recent events and it is of critical importance that this is now harnessed to further improve the work of the Panel and its working relationship with the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner. Public questions recently received relating to this agenda can be found at appendix A to this report. The issues raised can be summarised as follows:

Effective Scrutiny

It is clear that the role of the Panel is to scrutinise the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner at a strategic level and not to become involved in the operational detail of the Police Force. Some of the concerns that have emerged have highlighted this as an issue – **is the system effectively scrutinising operational police matters and how can this be improved?**

The Panel recently agreed to working protocols with the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees for each of the four local authorities in South Yorkshire, to share information and practices with them. Their scrutiny powers also have limitations, however, so **how does the Panel use all of the resources available to it to effectively scrutinise the police and crime agenda?**

The Panel adopted a pilot Task and Finish Group approach this year, and this would have been tested with its first main subject being that of Domestic Abuse. This has not been completed as a result of events of recent months and the effective suspension of the work programme for the Panel.

Panel members may wish to consider if piloting this approach should still be done and how effective this might be in scrutinising the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Other issues to consider include:

- **Resources required to effectively scrutinise the Police and Crime agenda**
- **The role of the PCP in supporting the PCC to effectively deliver on his strategic priorities**
- **Joint priorities for scrutiny and how these should be determined**

Public and community engagement

There is no doubt that the role of the public were key over the previous months, and the Panel took the decision to maximise the involvement of the public in its proceedings. The Panel should therefore consider:

- **How are the public effectively engaged in the work of the Panel**
- **Given that the statutory responsibility for public and victim consultation lies with the PCC, how can the PCP effectively support and add value to this?**
- **Is there a potential for a 3 way partnership, as suggested in the public questions?**

The new website is now live and it could be used to generate a debate with the public about these issues, using the community forum facility which exists on it.

Legal Powers

The debate at a national level has turned to the powers (or lack of them) the PCP's have in these circumstances. The Home Affairs Select Committee has forwarded a specific recommendation to the Government regarding this. It recommends that legislation allows for the recall of Police and Crime Commissioners if either the PCP makes a vote of no confidence, or at least one of the local authorities take a vote of no confidence, where they represent at least half of the population of the police area. Clearly, both of these factors would have been triggered in the recent case of South Yorkshire.

Panel may wish to consider whether this effectively allows for the crucial role that the public and victims played recently, and take a view on this as a recommendation to Government.

The Home Office, in reply to the Chair's recent letter confirmed that "the Government will reflect carefully on these suggestions and recommendations, and those of Parliament, and the public more generally."

Are there any further representations to be made by the Panel on this matter?

8. Finance

None

9. Risks and Uncertainties

None

10. Background Papers and Consultation

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Appendix A

Public Questions:

From Vicky Seddon, Sheffield for Democracy:

If the events in Rotherham have shown anything, they have shown the need for proper and effective scrutiny of the Police and Crime Commissioner, in order to be able to hold him or her to account. The undignified spectacle of calls, both local and national, for the Commissioner to resign, so long resisted by Commissioner Wright, with the Panel having no powers other than public pressure, has done nothing to assure the public that the Police Service is properly led. Nor have the failings of South Yorkshire Police in either bringing to justice the perpetrators of the abuse of those young women, or of preventing it happening, been addressed in a way that give the public confidence in this public service.

We ask you and your Panel to give careful consideration as to:

- 1. Whether you could have intervened earlier to progress the exposure of the police failings**
- 2. What kind of scrutiny process might be more effective**
- 3. What further powers the Panel might require in order to be more effective**
- 4. How best to publicise any outcome of your considerations of these matters.**

From Wendy Zealand, South Yorkshire Neighbourhood Watch

Having had the experience of being in place over the months of the past Police and Crime Commissioner post, and a lull to perhaps review their past work, will the Panel be making any changes as to its way of working when the position is filled again?

From Alan Kewley.

A few of us have attended Panel meetings over the past 18-months to try to understand the main issues by asking questions from the public bench, but this hasn't been easy. Discussions seem to have been 2-way between the PCC's office & the Panel, but we'd prefer these to be widened to include community groups.

We've been talking with PCC candidates at hustings, who seem willing to consider wider public engagement if elected, so my question to the Panel today is -

Following the PCC by-election, would the Panel be willing to consider regular 3-way discussions with the new PCC and representatives from community groups like Neighbourhood Watch, and how would they like to see these developing ?

From Nigel Slack, Sheffield for Democracy

The 6th report from the Home Affairs Select Committee, dealing with Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming, included as an annex a draft Bill for the recall of Police and Crime Commissioners.

What is the Panel's view on this draft and, with reference to the fact that it proposes recall petitions can only be triggered by this panel or the Local Councils, whether the powers for the public go far enough?