

FEEDBACK FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION POLICE
AND CRIME PANEL EVENT (INCLUDING MEMBERS'
ALLOWANCES)

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide feedback from the Local Government Association (LGA) Police and Crime Panel (PCP) support group event - 'Police and Crime Panels – reflections and insight from the first 139 days'.
2. To further consider the specific issue of Members' Allowances.

Information and Advice

3. This event, held at Local Government House, Smith Square, London on 21 March 2013, was attended by Councillor David Challinor and Councillor Eddie Fearon, along with Keith Ford (support officer to the Panel).
4. The event was chaired by Councillor Mehboob Khan (Chair of the LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board). Guest speakers included the Chairs of the Thames Valley, West Yorkshire, Sussex and Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland PCPs. Ed Hammond of the Centre for Public Scrutiny also gave a presentation on what a good Panel might look like (**see Appendix A**). Workshops were held to share experiences around confirmation hearings, complaints and scrutiny of the Police and Crime Plan and precept.
5. A summary of the outcomes from the day, including the workshops, will be published on the LGA's website in the near future. Key issues raised by Panel Chairmen and other attendees (some of which reflect the experience within Nottinghamshire) are as follows:-
 - i) There was a wide variety of experiences nationally and to some extent working relationships seemed to be dependent upon the personalities involved and their backgrounds (both in terms of Commissioners and Panel Members). The most positive working relationships involved Commissioners fully enabling a Panel to undertake their support role as well as their scrutiny role. The need for a positive attitude and to encourage and persuade Commissioners about issues rather than to fight personal battles via the media was emphasised.
 - ii) Panels had so far focussed on the statutory requirements (such as the consideration of the Police and Crime Plan and precept) rather than specific areas of scrutiny work. The tight timescales involved in this initial work had also proven problematic.

- iii) Panels were aware that their role was not to replicate the Police Authority and that performance monitoring needed to be at a high level. The importance of prioritising the work of a Panel in the future, for example by focusing in detail on specific Police and Crime Plan objectives at different meetings, was underlined.
- iv) The lack of adequate funding to properly support the work of Panels was recognised (including the issue of Members' Allowances). Some authorities had chosen to provide further additional funding to provide additional support. A number of councils had agreed to pay their representatives a Special Responsibility Allowance for being Panel Members (see paragraph 5 below).
- v) Although the Home Office had previously indicated that they expected Panels to take a 'light touch' approach to scrutiny, the recent issues around Health in Staffordshire had underlined the importance of proper scrutiny and accountability. Some Panels had chosen to give each Member specific responsibility for a Police and Crime Plan objective to enable further work to be undertaken by individuals outside of meetings and fed back to the Panel.
- vi) In light of the limitations in meeting time, some Panels had chosen to appoint sub-committees to undertake work on the Police and Crime Plan and the budget ahead of the full Panel's consideration. Task and Finish groups were also planned to deal with individual areas of scrutiny.
- vii) Overall, there had largely been a lack of political divisions seen amongst discussions at Panels so far, with Members focussing on wider community benefits. Negotiations and further work had been required to ensure Panels had the required political and geographical representation.
- viii) The need to promote the role and work of Panels was recognised, with very little coverage seen amongst the local and national media coverage of Police and Crime Commissioners. This could have an impact on how Commissioners viewed the Panels.
- ix) Some Panels had arranged a question and answer session at each meeting, for Panel Members to raise any issues with the Commissioner without notice.
- x) The quality and quantity of paperwork submitted by Commissioners had not always been of the standard expected, for example, very little information had been given about candidates and appointment processes ahead of confirmation hearings. The use of one page summaries and executive summaries by some authorities was highlighted as useful.

- xi) There was a need to consider how technology could be fully utilised to assist in reducing the costs of Panels.
6. With regard to the issue of Member allowances, it was clear from the event that there is varying practice across the country, and indeed even between authorities represented on the same Panel (for example, one Panel has some Members receiving no allowance, some receiving £11,000 and others receiving £6,500 – with no additional allowances for Chairman / Vice-Chairman responsibilities).
 7. Gedling Borough Council wrote to the County Council (as the host authority) on 28 March 2013 to share the findings of its Independent Remuneration Panel which had considered the issue of allowances for Members and the Chairman of the Panel (**see Appendix B**). This recommended setting up a joint independent remuneration panel in line with the approach taken by Norfolk PCP.
 8. Having contacted Norfolk PCP we have been informed that the proposed joint remuneration panel has yet to be arranged as it was felt that further time was needed to assess the full extent of a Panel's Chairman's workload and to decide whether a remuneration panel was actually required.
 9. In light of this, it is suggested that further work be undertaken ahead of the annual meeting in June so that the Panel can then decide whether to recommend the setting up on a joint independent remuneration panel.

Other Options Considered

10. None.

Reasons for Recommendation/s

11. To keep Members updated on national experiences of other PCPs.
12. To enable Members to take a fully informed decision about the proposal to hold an independent remuneration panel.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the key issues raised at the Local Government Association event be considered.
- 2) That further work be undertaken to enable a report on a possible joint independent remuneration panel to be considered at the annual meeting in June 2013.

Background Papers and Published Documents

- 1) Conference Handbook

For any enquiries about this report please contact:-

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