

**Media Protocol**

**Between**

**The Police and Crime Panel for Nottinghamshire**

**And**

**The Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime  
Commissioner**

**Date of Agreement: November 2012**

**Date of Review: November 2013**

# **Media Communications Protocol**

Media communications protocol between the Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel (PCP).

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## **1. Context**

It is expected that a constructive working relationship between the Commissioner and the PCP will develop and it is therefore recognised that their respective media advisers must work together to ensure an informed approach to media and public relations activity.

To prevent any potential confusion on areas of responsibility it is necessary to consider the key roles of the respective parties.

It is also necessary to acknowledge that these are new roles, without earlier templates to follow. Therefore, it is sensible to anticipate a necessary degree of flexibility in relation to this protocol and put in place measures to facilitate exception.

### **The Police and Crime Panel (PCP)**

The Commissioner's work will be scrutinised by a Police and Crime Panel (PCP) made up of local authority representatives plus two additional co-opted members.

The Panel forms a key part of the checks and balances within the new policing landscape. Its role is not to scrutinise the performance of the Force; that is the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Rather, the Panel will scrutinise the actions and decisions of the Commissioner.

As part of this role, the Panel:

- will review the police and crime plan and annual report;
- has the power to veto the Commissioner's proposed council tax precept for policing;
- can demand that the Commissioner attends its meetings to explain his actions;
- may invite the Chief Constable to appear before them;
- may refuse to sanction the Commissioner's proposed appointment of a Chief Constable.

The Panel is hosted by Nottinghamshire County Council, with all governance, communications and administrative functions carried out by Council officers.

### **Police and Crime Commissioner**

The Police and Crime Commissioner will have a wide range of responsibilities which will include local community safety issues and crime reduction as well as policing. To achieve this, the Commissioner will commission services from organisations such as community safety partnerships and criminal justice agencies.

Other key duties include:

- Control of the local budget for policing and community safety;
- Setting the amount of locally-raised council tax that goes towards policing;
- Producing a Police and Crime Plan which includes local and national priorities;
- Promoting joint working between police and community safety partners;
- Holding the Chief Constable to account for performance on behalf of local people;
- Appointing (and if required dismissing) the Chief Constable;
- Publishing an annual report to keep people informed;
- Ensuring that public priorities are acted upon, victims are consulted and that the most vulnerable individuals are not overlooked;
- Addressing national issues as well as local concerns.

### **The relationship between the PCP and the Commissioner**

The panel will scrutinise the Commissioner's work and it is expected that there will be a minimum of four key meetings per annum.

The PCP's role is to hold the Commissioner to account and as such it will be required to review, and on occasions challenge, the Commissioner's decisions, performance and crime strategies.

However, fundamentally the relationship between the PCP and the Commissioner is expected to be one of mutual support as both parties share the same long-term goals; to cut crime and to improve the safety of the public.

Therefore, there is an opportunity for proactive, confidence-raising, PR activity to be co-ordinated between the parties in order to improve public confidence and provide reassurance.

## **2. Principles**

It is important to recognise that the PCP and the Commissioner are independent of each other and have their own distinct functions, services and priorities. The Commissioner, in particular, will reasonably seek to establish a specific public profile via their media communications.

The PCP, on the other hand, has a specific responsibility to oversee the work of the Commissioner on behalf of communities and will be governed to some extent by the opinions and concerns of the public.

The public, and the media, have a right to information about the areas of responsibility for each organisation and their aims, views and priorities. This is a right extended by the Freedom of Information Act and a full publication scheme is available on the OPCC's and the PCP's respective websites.

Working together – and being seen to work together – can enhance the quality, consistency and reliability of information released to the media, and enhance the reputation of each organisation. A co-ordinated approach with regards to media communications will benefit both parties and most critically, the public, even in circumstances where the two parties are not in agreement.

There will be occasions when each organisation will have different views and direction or when a statement or message contains potentially conflicting information. In such circumstances both communications teams will keep each other informed in advance, if possible, to allow preparation of a balancing comment or response.

Similarly, there may also be occasions when comments are made to the press that cause surprise or consternation in one or both organisations by third parties. In such circumstances, it is agreed the media representatives will keep each other informed of both comment and response.

### **3. Purpose**

This protocol is designed to

- ensure effectiveness, clarity and timeliness of action when matters concerning one or both parties are, or are deemed likely to be, of public/media interest.
- ensure that the areas of responsibility and related working practices across both parties are clearly defined to enable a coherent and informed response to public/press interest.
- ensure a good working relationships between the two parties, with particular emphasis on the respective communications leads.

It does not, under any circumstances, seek to place restrictions on, or influence the message of, either party.

### **4. Scope**

This protocol is intended to cover both proactive and reactive media communications activity by the PCP and Commissioner.

All varieties of media communications activity from traditional printed and broadcast vehicles, including interviews and opinion pieces; to social and new media, can have an impact in terms of reputation and the public's feelings of safety. Thus, the full range of channels and techniques will need to be assessed for suitability against any particular communication challenge.

This protocol defines media communications as:

- Press releases and written statements given to the print and broadcast media.
- Interviews and opinion pieces given to the print and broadcast media.
- Briefings, interviews, verbal statements and press conferences.
- Publicity material, including posters, brochures, leaflets, newsletters and reports.
- Media information, blogs and commentary released across each organisation's social media websites.
- Broadcast interviews, documentaries and public interest programmes.
- Information published on each organisation's website.

## **5. Objectives**

Specific objectives are

- To enable the selection and implementation of effective media/PR activity in support of the responsibilities of the PCP and the Commissioner and, where appropriate, to facilitate a joint approach to managing these activities.
- To enhance the quality, accuracy and timeliness of public information.
- To promote and enhance awareness of shared messages on crime reduction and community reassurance.
- To promote a positive image of the PCP and the Commissioner, increasing public confidence in policing and community safety.
- To promote a close working relationship between the PCP and the Commissioner, sharing information on matters that have a significant impact on the image and reputation of either organisation.
- To minimise the possibility of conflicting messages being issued due to lack of advance communication between the parties.
- To ensure that where there are matters of sensitivity both parties are aware of any conflicting or potentially damaging views.

It is accepted that the priority area of activity for the PCP will be highlighting the consideration and scrutiny given to the decisions of the Commissioner on behalf of the public.

The Commissioner's priorities will be promoting issues relating to priorities, performance, budget accountability to the public and matters relating to the overall effectiveness and the efficiency of the Force.

## **6. Operation**

A number of operational commitments are necessary to enable effective implementation of the media/PR activity discussed in this protocol:

- Communications professionals in each organisation shall undertake to inform each other at the earliest opportunity of likely or actual relevant media communications activity, as defined in this protocol.
- Communications professionals in each organisation shall manage the activity in the most appropriate way, being mindful of issues of confidentiality. This could include (1) sharing key messages or deciding on a joint statement, briefing or press conference, (2) an agreement that one organisation is the

lead partner, (3) separate activity, reflecting that one organisation may disagree with the other's position or proposed course of action.

- Material issued by either party, which relates to the activities or work of the other party, will be shared, in advance where possible, with the relevant communications team.
- Material issued by both parties will be placed on their respective websites, and shared electronically with a named individual in the respective communications teams.
- An archive of material issued will be maintained.
- A record of press enquiries, where the enquiries potentially impinge on the activity of the other party, will be kept and shared in a timely fashion.
- Communications professionals in each organisation shall meet regularly to discuss strategies to achieve the long-term aim of reassuring the public, to develop joint key messages and to discuss challenges facing the parties, thereby ensuring early consideration of any important issues.
- In instances of sensitive, or conflicting, positions communications professionals representing each organisation undertake to keep each other informed on a 'no surprises' basis. Any confidentiality or embargo relating to this information will naturally be upheld.
- Communications professionals in both organisations agree to respond to requests for information or other support in a timely fashion, with the minimum response being an acknowledgment of any request within one working day.
- Contact details will be provided for requirements outside normal working hours.

## **7. Review**

This protocol should be reviewed six months after its implementation date.

## **8. Key Contacts**

### **Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel**

Communications Lead:

- Name
- Tel
- Email

Chief Governance Officer:

- Name
- Tel
- Email

Chairman:

- Name
- Tel
- Email

Other useful contacts.....

### **Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner**

Communications Lead:

- Name
- Tel
- Email

Chief Executive:

- Name
- Tel
- Email

Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire.

- Name
- Tel
- Email

Other useful contacts.....

### **Signed on Behalf of the Police and Crime Panel for Nottinghamshire**

Signature

Print

Position

Date

### **Signed on Behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire**

Signature



Print

Position

Date