

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide feedback from the Public Engagement task and finish group meeting held on 23 October 2014.

**Information and Advice**

2. At its meeting on 15 September 2014, the Panel established a task and finish group to consider the issues of public engagement with the Panel and the Commissioner. The group consisted of Councillor Eunice Campbell, Councillor Debby mason and Bob Vaughan-Newton. A meeting was arranged for 23 October 2014 (which unfortunately Councillor Campbell could not attend due to a subsequent commitment).

**The Commissioner's approach to Public Engagement**

3. Kevin Dennis, Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) attended the meeting to provide information about the Commissioner's engagement activities as follows:-
  - a. The Commissioner does not hold surgeries but he does makes himself very available to meet with members of the public individually, especially around complaints.
  - b. a number of budget focus groups have been commissioned by the OPCC, targeted at geographic areas and specific groups. These groups have been commissioned through an independent research company and attendance is limited to a maximum number of 12 people. They are designed to ensure attendees are representative of the public.
  - c. The following information about budget focus groups that have taken place was shared by the OPCC subsequent to the task and finish group meeting:-

<b><u>Event</u></b>	<b><u>Time &amp; date</u></b>	<b><u>Number of attendees</u></b>
Nottingham City	25/11/14 – 6.30pm	12
North Notts. (Workshop)	26/11/14 – 6.30pm	7
South Notts. (Bingham)	27/11/14 - 6.30pm	10
Women's Focus Group (Nottingham)	27/11/14 – 6.30pm	10

- d. The following further events are due to take place in January 2015 and the task and finish group members have been invited to attend to observe:-

<b><u>Event</u></b>	<b><u>Time &amp; date</u></b>	<b><u>Venue</u></b>
General Consultation event on the budget and the Police and Crime Plan	8/1/15 – 9.30am	The Nottingham Mechanics, 3 North Sherwood Street, Nottingham
Black & Minority Ethnic Focus Group	14/1/15 – 6.30pm	The Nottingham Mechanics, 3 North Sherwood Street, Nottingham

- e. A resident's survey was also arranged last Summer around specific new legislation such as the new Community Remedy legislation;
- f. the Force undertakes regular neighbourhood priority setting surveys and meetings. Questions on policing are also included within the City Council's Citizens' Survey and Nottingham Crime and Drug Partnership's Respect survey. Engagement also takes place via City Council and County Council equalities forums and the Force's Independent Advisory Groups (although the number of these had reduced). The opportunities to 'piggyback' onto other partner agencies' consultation exercises had reduced in recent times with a number of District Councils no longer undertaking such surveys.
- g. The OPCC was organising a survey around the 15 Partnership Plus Areas (PPAs) and had recently produced surveys about other specific issues such as Anti-Social Behaviour and alcohol. The findings from this survey should be known in January 2015.
- h. The Commissioner's own meetings were open to the public. The bimonthly Strategic Resources and Performance meeting followed a thematic approach, with relevant partner agencies and members of the public encouraged to attend and venues rotated to maximise participation. For example, a recent Strategic Resources and Performance meeting had been held at Rushcliffe Civic Centre and focussed on issues in Trent Ward and The Avenue in West Bridgford and a similar themed meeting had taken place in Aspley previously.
- i. The Commissioner had received requests to set up a message board facility on his website but he felt that this was not necessary due to him already providing social media engagement, including via Twitter and Facebook. At this stage he felt that a forum was not required unless demand for such a facility increased. The Commissioner's website was also updated on a regular basis and provided another opportunity for engagement. This website also offered the public the opportunity to complete an online survey.

- j. The Commissioner had planned to hold Stakeholder Board meetings on a quarterly basis, with invites sent to relevant third sector organisations with links to policing and crime. The aim of these Boards was for attendees to raise issues so that they could be addressed within the Police and Crime Plan as appropriate. To date, the quarterly cycle had not been followed but two events in both the City and the County had been held so far.
- k. The Commissioner's newsletter was produced four times a year and was distributed electronically to over 3,000 recipients.
- l. The OPCC receives a large amount of complaints and requests for service from members of the public and sometimes the nature of complaints were outside the responsibility of the Commissioner and could only be dealt with by the Chief Constable. The OPCC always tried to give a specific and helpful response to contact from the public (it had been previously recognised that more specific and individual responses were required).
- m. With regard to complaints, the OPCC dip samples complaints against officers (other than the Chief Constable) to clarify whether the relevant processes have been followed and the outcomes are reported to the Commissioner's Audit and Scrutiny Panel. The stages in the complaints process were explained as follows:-
  - i. Assessment of whether it is a complaint or a request for service;
  - ii. If it is a complaint it is referred either:-
    - 1. for local resolution (a course of action which the complainant has to agree to); or
    - 2. for formal investigation by the Professional Standards Department (to decide if disciplinary action or further training is required).
- n. Guidance had been developed for developed for dealing with vexatious complaints.
- o. In response to Members' requests for examples of where complaints or consultation had led to changes in policies, processes or proposals, the following were highlighted:-
  - i. Victims consultation;
  - ii. Community Remedy;
  - iii. Alcohol Action Plan;
  - iv. Black and Minority Ethnic Communities research;
  - v. Location of Mansfield Woodhouse police base.

- p. The Commissioner had also agreed a Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy at the start of his term of office and he hoped to refresh this in the New Year. It was agreed that it would be helpful for this to be a joint piece of work, with the Panel helping to review the revised Strategy.

### **The Panel's proposed approach to Public Engagement**

- 4. Members highlighted that few members of the public had contacted them directly about policing and crime issues.
- 5. It was agreed that as an initial step, the Panel's own webpages should be further developed to raise awareness of its role and to highlight means of contacting Members.

### **Conclusions**

- 6. Members were satisfied that the Commissioner's current activities offered a variety of opportunities for the public to engage with the Commissioner. It was felt that more qualitative information would be helpful to enable an overall assessment of this activity. Members' attendance at budget consultation events would provide an opportunity to assess this activity in more depth.
- 7. It was also suggested that update reports should be provided to the Panel on a six monthly basis to detail:-
  - a. consultation events arranged by the Commissioner (and the issues raised at those events); and
  - b. complaints received by the Commissioner and their outcomes.
- 8. It was agreed that the Panel should be requested to review the refresh of Commissioner's Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy in 2015.

### **Other Options Considered**

- 9. None.

### **Reasons for Recommendation/s**

- 10. The further scrutiny of the Commissioner's engagement activities will enable the Panel to fully assess these activities and seek further assurance that the public are engaging with him.
- 11. Improvements to the Panel's webpages will hopefully raise awareness of the role of the Panel and its Members, and increase public engagement.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That Members note the initial outcomes of the task and finish group as detailed within this report.
- 2) That the task and finish group members provide feedback to the February meeting of the Panel on their observations of the Commissioner's budget consultation events in January 2015.
- 3) That the Commissioner provide the Panel with six monthly update reports on consultation events and complaint received.
- 4) That the Panel agree to input into the refresh of the Commissioner's Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy in 2015.
- 5) That the Panel webpages on the County Council's website be further developed to help raise awareness and increase engagement with the public.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Notes of task and finish group held on 23 October 2015.

## **For any enquiries about this report please contact:-**

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