

AGENDA ITEM 9

Essex Police and Crime Panel	EPCP/13/13
Date: 1 August 2013	

Planning the Business of the Panel

Report by the Secretary to the Panel

Enquiries to Colin Ismay 01245 430396 e mail: colin.ismay@essex.gov.uk

Purpose of report

To consider the development of the Panel's forward plan of work and meetings.

Background

The Panel has had a number of meetings in shadow form and as a full-blown Panel looking at how it might work and fulfilling the statutory set pieces of its role. So it has considered and approved the Commissioner's precept proposals, commented on the police and crime plan and held three confirmatory hearings in a row. At the same time it has been an interesting time for the Commissioner getting to understand his role and putting in place the Office and processes he needs to be able to undertake his role.

This has meant that whilst there has been some discussion about how to undertake other aspects of the Panel's role of holding the Commissioner to account it has been difficult to pin down how this will be achieved in practice. This is the additional work, complementing the set piece events being carried out to deliver the statutory functions, to help the Panel support the work of the Commissioner. The Panel should be acting as a critical friend, a supportive but independent voice seeking to investigate the Commissioner in the interests of recommending – not directing or seeking to co-ordinate – changes and improvements.

Agreement to item 6 on the Agenda will mean that the Commissioner should in future be able to provide quarterly updates on performance management to the Panel. This could be enhanced by similar updates on performance against the budget. Proposed dates for a programme providing quarterly progress meetings and meetings in January and February to meet statutory requirements in relation to the precept and budget will be available in time for the meeting. Is there any other information the Panel might want to request from the Commissioner's Office on a regular basis?

Suggestions for subjects for further investigation

In terms of thinking about what areas of work the Panel might want to give more in depth investigation into the following suggestions have already been made and no doubt there will be others. This needs to be considered in the context of the Panel not being able to involve itself directly in operational matters and in terms of how this relates to the Commissioner holding the Chief Constable to account.

From previous meetings

An overarching report on how policing is being delivered to give the Panel a strategic overview of policing in Essex.

Monitoring performance against delivering the Police and Crime Plan and the Budget
Specific issues selected from the Policing Plan for further consideration by getting to understand the baselines.

“Legal Highs”.

From Councillor Angie Gaywood:

the top five areas from Thurrock’s perspective that we would like to scrutinise against the crime plan:

Sexual Violence

Domestic Abuse

Anti-social Behaviour

Hate Crime

Domestic Burglary

As the crime plan outlines a distinct focus for victims of crime we would want to see how within these areas victims are fully supported.

From Councillor Bob Shepherd:

the lengthy closures of our major roads when accidents happen.

From the Labour members on the Panel:

We have specific concerns with regard to the following: - Partnership working with Kent and other forces, the numbers of Community police officers, and the methodology of allocation of grants.

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee Report printed on 16 May 2013

Attached for consideration as part of the discussion of the work of the Panel is a copy of the Select Committee’s Report. The Report makes the point that:

“In between elections, the Police and Crime Panel is, in all but the most extreme circumstance, the only check on a PCC’s power over local policing. All three of the PCP chairs we heard from believed that their Panels did not have strong powers to hold a PCC

to account. Parliament has defined the power of PCPs and it is the responsibility of the PCPs to exercise their powers. We are concerned that incompetent legal advisers appear to have sought to prevent PCPs from even meeting to scrutinise key and highly questionable decisions by PCCs, for instance the suspension of the chief constable in Lincolnshire and the fiasco concerning the appointment of a “Youth Commissioner” in Kent. It is in such circumstances that a PCP chair needs to ensure that the PCP meets urgently. If they fail to do so, on the basis of wholly inappropriate legal advice or otherwise, the process of local scrutiny of the PCP role falls into disrepute.”

The report sets out some interesting findings concerning the Committee’s initial scrutiny of the role of the Commissioner.

Training and Development

The Panel might want to think about whether it needs and further training and development or expert advice in order to carry out its role. Resources are available from the Home Office that could be used for this purpose if necessary.

Is there any information or situation the Panel would find it helpful to have / or have a better understanding for instance would a sharpened awareness and insight of community safety issues be of assistance?

Such events need not be undertaken as part of a formal meeting.

The Panel is asked to consider how it might want its Forward Plan to develop.