

Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

Outcomes of Consideration of the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner's Draft Police and Crime Plan

The Suffolk Police and Crime Panel on 25 January 2013 reviewed the draft Police and Crime Plan of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Suffolk. The Panel was fully represented with 13 members, two of whom were substitutes.

The Panel received a written summary paper which highlighted the following key areas for the Panel to consider:

- a) How does the draft Police and Crime Plan address some of the areas set out in sections 7 and 14 of the Act? These include:
 - (i) The police and crime objectives, for local policing and crime and disorder reduction, and for the discharge of national or international functions,
 - (ii) The policing of the police area,
 - (iii) The financial and other resources provided to the Chief Constable,
 - (iv) The means by which the Chief Constable will report to and be performance measured by the PCC,
 - (v) Crime and disorder reduction grants to be made by the PCC,
 - (vi) Arrangements for obtaining the views of the community.
- b) How has the formulation of the Plan followed the process for strategic planning, assessment and consultation that was set out in the report to the Panel on 23 October 2012?
- c) What are the next steps to finalise the Plan by 31 March 2013, including stakeholder consultation feedback?
- d) What learning is there from the process used to develop the Plan that may be used in future reviews of the Plan?

The Panel considered the following documents provided by the Office of the PCC:

- Draft Police and Crime Plan 2013-2017,
- PCC Decision 4 – 2013,
- Annex A - The Draft Police and Crime Plan - 17 January 2013,
- Annex A - Appendix 1 - Performance Assessment Framework,
- Annex B - Strategic Planning Framework 2013-14,
- Annex C - Suffolk CSP Strategic Assessment Process Briefing,
- Annex D - Arrangements for obtaining the views of the community and victims on policing,
- Annex D1 - Key Consultation Activities 2012-13.

Copies are available on the Suffolk County Council website on the link given below:

[http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/searchResult.aspx?qry=c_committee~~Police%20and%20Crime%20Panel%20\(Joint%20Committee\)](http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/searchResult.aspx?qry=c_committee~~Police%20and%20Crime%20Panel%20(Joint%20Committee))

Accompanying the PCC, Tim Passmore, at the Panel meeting were Chris Jackson (Chief Executive), Claire Swallow (Deputy Chief Executive) and Chris Bland (Chief Finance Officer) from the PCC's Office, and Paul Marshall, Temporary Deputy Chief Constable.

The Chairman of the Panel invited the PCC to address the Panel before inviting the Panel members to ask questions.

The PCC informed the Panel that the draft plan would be subject to review, and he would welcome comments from all interested parties. He expected to produce a final draft of the plan in early March 2013. He informed the Panel that he was aware that many families were currently experiencing difficult economic circumstances, and he therefore intended to freeze the Precept for one year. This would not preclude an increase in future years. He considered that the Plan was consistent with his proposal and was not overambitious in its remit.

The Panel heard that the Plan affected anyone who lived in, worked in, travelled through or invested in Suffolk. It recognised the importance of the role of the family in the promotion of social stability, the importance of respect for other people and for law and order, and the benefits which society derived from economic growth and the protection of the economy. The Plan considered issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, business crime, domestic abuse, sexual crime, and antisocial behaviour and it recognised the need to work closely and effectively with partners, and the importance of addressing issues which affected staff morale.

The PCC reminded the Panel that he did not have a background in policing, which he considered to be an advantage as it made it easier for him to make objective judgements. He commented that some tensions in other parts of the Country had unfairly tarnished the reputation of the Police, and he considered that it was his role to promote the Suffolk Police and to facilitate communications between them and the public, encouraging the public to ensure that all crime was reported. He said that he would work closely with partner organisations to ensure that relationships were effective and productive for both parties.

In response to questions and comments from the Panel (underlined text below), the Police and Crime Commissioner made the following points:

Implementation of the Plan

The Panel commented that the Plan was very aspirational and no-one could disagree with it, but asked where the choices and priorities were, given the limited budget.

The Police and Crime Commissioner agreed that this was a very aspirational Plan, but he considered that it was achievable. He said that the Plan was based on a considerable amount of background detail and information, which would be available on the internet and referenced properly in the final document. Details of the police funding settlement had not yet been released but this should be available in the final Plan.

The PCC highlighted that the Constabulary were forecasting an underspend of £1 million in 2012/13, and that not increasing the precept would mean that Council Tax Freeze Grant equivalent to a 1% increase would be received.

The Panel asked for further details regarding weighting of priorities.

The Panel heard that the policing priorities identified in the Performance Assessment Framework within the Plan had not been weighted because, in practice, priorities varied seasonally and locally. Members heard from the temporary Deputy Chief Constable, that the Constabulary were satisfied that the priorities were in line with their expectations and previous practice.

The Panel asked if anything had been removed from previous plans to produce this one.

The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that this plan had initially been written in isolation from previous plans, so that priorities could be redefined.

The Panel asked how the Plan would be implemented and how the Police and Crime Commissioner would ensure that targets would not lead to inappropriate delivery of policing.

The Police and Crime Commissioner reminded the Panel that operational policing was the responsibility of the Constabulary and the PCC's role was to define policy. However, he would need to have complete clarity about how delivery would be monitored and this would be achieved by the production of a delivery plan including realistic targets which would be linked to promises in the Plan. The Police and Crime Commissioner would then be able to monitor the achievement of the Constabulary in relation to the promises in the Plan and report back to the Police and Crime Panel. National guidelines (for example response times) would be used as minimum performance indicators, which the Constabulary would strive to improve upon.

The Panel asked how the Police and Crime Commissioner would ensure best practice and learn from what works elsewhere.

The Police and Crime Commissioner stated that he would ensure that best practice was implemented and that the organisation was open to new ideas. New procedures would be closely monitored and adjusted as necessary.

The Panel asked how the Police and Crime Commissioner would ensure that the Suffolk Police was recompensed for support provided to other forces.

The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that he would review the wording on page 19 of the Draft Police and Crime Plan as it had been misunderstood. It had been intended that this section would apply to support for activities such as football matches.

Police Staff

The Panel asked whether there would be reductions in the numbers of frontline officers, back office or support staff.

The Panel heard that there were currently just fewer than 1200 officers serving in Suffolk and, following a recruitment exercise, it was planned that the number would be brought up to 1200 in the next few months. There were no plans to make fundamental changes to any staff numbers in the short term.

The Panel asked whether the structure of Safer Neighbourhood Teams would remain and whether they would liaise with Panel members.

Panel members were assured that the structure of Safer Neighbourhood Teams would not be substantially altered. Links between local members and Safer Neighbourhood Teams would be strengthened. In the PCC's view, Panel liaison with the SNT's would be welcomed.

The Panel asked what the plan would do to address staff morale and reduce sickness levels and encourage buy-in and engagement from staff.

The Police and Crime Commissioner commented that he had visited many police stations in Suffolk and, having spoken to many officers of varied ranks, had invariably found their reactions to the Plan to be positive. Staff absence levels were an operational issue and the PCC was aware that the Constabulary was taking steps to address this. He added that as PCC, by being open to liaising with staff at all levels, and considering issues such as uniform and police station facilities and operational conditions and circumstances, he hoped that implementation of the Plan would have a positive impact on staff morale.

Partnerships

The Panel commented that many potential partners were currently shrinking and changing. They asked whether the Police and Crime Commissioner was confident that any partnerships the Police entered into would be productive and sustainable and how long term public behavioural changes would be achieved.

The Police and Crime Commissioner stated that there were important links between the Police Service and organisations such as mental health services, education providers, Probation Services and the business community. He said that it was important for all partners to work together and support each other as much as possible, and he had a big role in facilitating this and considerable experience in this area. Partnerships could be used to promote sustainable long term benefits, for example by changing behaviour and reducing re-offending rates. The Police and Crime Commissioner was keen to promote sustainable projects, but appreciated the need to achieve a balance between this and project viability.

The Panel asked whether the commissioning model with voluntary bodies would enable economies of scale.

The Police and Crime Commissioner said that he was aware of the issues associated with commissioning models between authorities and voluntary bodies, and would strive to ensure that all partnerships were able to work effectively. The PCC had already paid attention to the partnerships which the Local Authority had made with third sector organisations, but had been unable to progress any relationships themselves because the Government had not yet finalised their funding settlement. However, there had been tentative discussions with voluntary organisations about commencing work on a commissioning model. There were big advantages to be gained for all partners from collaboration and there was often more access to funding for partnerships than for individual organisations. There had also been discussions about procurement, as the best prices were probably achieved collectively.

The Panel asked for further details of the collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary.

The Police and Crime Commissioner advised that the relationship with Norfolk Constabulary had produced substantial savings as well as increased co-operation across borders. It would be reviewed when the new Suffolk Chief Constable had been appointed, and the findings of the review would be published and shared with the public. It was possible that an Estates Review for example would be performed collaboratively with Norfolk Constabulary.

The Panel asked for the views of the Police and Crime Commissioner on policing of the night time economy.

The Police and Crime Commissioner stated that he would discuss the issue of licensing with Local Authorities and work with them to address the unacceptable behaviour issues to which Police Officers were regularly exposed.

Consultation

The Panel asked what processes had been put in place to continue consultation with the Public about the draft Plan and to further publicise it to the public.

The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that as part of his formal role, he would be meeting with representatives from each of the District and Borough Councils four times a year and his communications policy was being developed to include ongoing opportunities for him to get feedback from other sectors on a regular basis. With regard to the Plan, this had been sent in draft to about 170 bodies across the county, including local authorities, statutory partners and other bodies with which the police service maintained links, such as business representatives and Chambers of Commerce. Victim Support had also discussed the Plan with victims of crime as appropriate. There had been a press release in the local media and the Plan was available on the website. Most responses so far had been via the website and had been specific and practical; the larger consultees were still discussing the Plan internally and so their formal responses had not yet been received.

The Decision of the Panel

The Panel was generally satisfied with the responses received.

The Panel:

- 1) recommended that the Police and Crime Commissioner seek to promote comments to the draft Plan by making copies available in public libraries in Suffolk.
- 2) requested to be updated with developments on discussions with the Home Office on future funding allocation.
- 3) Requested the following information to be provided for the Panel meeting on 4 March 2013:
 - (a) an update on stakeholder feedback to the Draft Plan and any significant changes being made to the plan as result of the consultation process ;
 - (b) Information on the commissioning process.
- 4) Requested that the PCC should arrange for the Panel to receive, at a future meeting, a report on arrangements for monitoring targets in relation to the Plan and progress towards achieving them.

Councillor Patricia O'Brien
Chairman of the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

4 February 2013