

STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL – 10 February 2020
NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANELS
and
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANELS
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

19 NOVEMBER 2019

1. Report of the Secretary

Your Vice-Chairman, Mr Darby, Mr Walker (Independent Member) and your support officer attended the National Conference for Police, Fire and Crime Panels at Warwick University on 19 November 2019. This was the 8th National Conference organised by Frontline Consulting. Representatives of most Panels in England and Wales attend this event as it is recognised as a valuable opportunity to update on the national picture for Panels.

The presence of representatives of the majority of Panels provided the opportunity to also stage the AGM of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels (NAPFCPs).

2. NAPFCPs Annual General Meeting.

The Association was established in 2018 as a Special Interest Group under the auspices of the Local Government Association. The April 2018 Panel meeting approved Staffordshire's membership of the Association at an annual subscription fee of £500.

The formation of an Association had been pursued as it provides a means of information sharing, networking and joint working with other Panels and gives a united voice in discussions with other organisations including the Home Office and the National Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. It was also intended that the work of the Panel would be extended to commission training.

Since the establishment of the Association a number of Panels have experienced difficulty in meeting their subscription obligation as the Home Office have specifically deemed that subscription to not be payable from their Grant to Panels and many have no alternative source of funding. This AGM therefore considered and agreed a revision to the Association's Constitution to make it a non-fee paying organisation. The consequence of this is that training and development will be through member Panels supporting each other and sharing best practice, and through events such as the Annual Conference and the meetings which the LGA will host as part of the Special Interest Group arrangements.

3. National Conference

The event followed its successful format of having a keynote speaker and Q/A session during the morning and a selection of themed workshops during the afternoon.

3.1 Keynote Speech – Strategic Review of Policing – Dr Rick Muir, Director, Police Foundation

Dr Muir referred to the many ways in which crime and demands on the Criminal Justice System had changed in recent years (Cyber, international dimension, the rise in serious violence, changes in social attitudes towards issues such as Child Sexual Exploitation and Domestic Violence, increasing calls for the Police involvement in addressing non-criminal problems such as Anti-Social Behaviour). The result was that the Criminal Justice System could not be considered in its traditional sense. In addition, budget reductions for policing had meant that the Police had had to prioritise its services however the public had not been involved in determining those priorities.

Dr Muir reported that as calls for a Royal Commission to consider the long term focus and aims of national policing policy had been unsuccessful, his organisation had stepped in to carry out a review. The first stage involved seeking views of the public via a call for evidence.

Dr Muir was accompanied by a Panel comprising Lorraine Atkinson from the Howard League for Penal Reform, Christine Goldstraw OBE, Chairman of Nottinghamshire PCP and Paul Grady, Grant Thornton's Head of Police.

During comment by the Panel and the Q/A session the following points were made:

- The skills required of the Police workforce overall needed to be determined
- Consultation with the public should address affordability
- It was important to seek the views of the younger population
- Previous reform had focussed on localism whereas resources were increasingly being top sliced for regional and national issues – leaving Commissioners with responsibility for all policing in their area but only a percentage of the funding
- There is a need for a clearer understanding of what is meant/expected by 'Community Policing'
- The long term sustainability of a Policing Model comprising 43 Forces needed to be considered in the context of statistic showing that 50% of crime nationally is dealt with by 5 Forces. Political considerations were acknowledged
- The Police Service provides the link between multiple other agencies – the more complex crime is becoming, the greater the need for these agencies to work together
- Community Safety Partnerships should be included within the scope of the Review

3.2 Workshops

3.2.1 Preparing for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Elections 2020 (feedback from your Support Officer)- A brief summary was given of the election process itself and the implications of Purdah on officer working relationships with any Commissioner seeking re-election.

This item gives me the opportunity to report that the Commissioner's Office has an Officer Working Group addressing all aspects of the election including preparations for the successful candidate taking office. I am invited to those meetings as your representative and will report to your Chairman on any matter that may be relevant to the Panel.

*3.2.2 Police **Fire** and Crime Panels – Discussion Forum (feedback from your Support Officer) –* This session was specifically provided for those Panels whose Commissioner has, or is seeking, governance responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service in their area, to share information and experiences. In reality there are few Panels with the extended remit as a number reported that Judicial Reviews at various stages of the decision process.

For the Panels with 'Fire and Rescue' included in their remit, the experience to date mirrored that of Staffordshire in so far as the additional workload was currently manageable and fire expertise had been brought into their membership. For everyone it was relatively early days with collaborative working at various stages of progress.

3.2.3. Effective Scrutiny

Feedback from Mr Darby- Delegates felt that there was strong argument for Panels to be given more powers, for example to support the Commissioner in holding the Chief Constable to account. Views were also expressed on the dependence of Panels' success on their Commissioner regarding them as 'critical friends' representing the public interest.

Feedback from Mr Walker - The workshop focussed on the statutory functions of the PFC Panels and outlined the primary responsibilities of scrutinising the Commissioner's:

Police and Crime Plan

Proposed Precept

Annual Report

Appointment of Chief Constable (Confirmation hearing) and Chief Fire Officer.

Appointment of certain senior staff.

Complaints about the Commissioner.

The discussions centred around what is effective scrutiny and what is necessary to provide an environment where effective scrutiny can take place. The main points raised were:

Clarity of role and good Panel / commissioner relationships.
Insight / understanding of the strategic policing landscape in the local area.
A sense of focus and direction.
Adequate staffing support.
Commitment by Panel members.
Sound use of resources.
Availability and timely supply of information to Panels.

The most interesting part of the discussions was around who attends Panel meetings. Almost exclusively, the chief constable would attend panel meetings. If s/he was not available, the deputy CC would attend. It was also routine for other police officers / police staff to attend meetings to give updates on specific policing issues. In some cases, even staff associations – Police Federation and Unison were invited to meetings.

3.2.4. Reducing the arrests of women (Feedback from Mr Darby) – A representative of the Howard League for Penal Reform led this workshop and gave details of a three year Programme being undertaken by that organisation to stem the flow of women into the criminal justice system. The League promotes the importance of recognising that the management of women in the criminal justice system needs a different approach than that adopted towards men. They explain that as a woman's first point of contact with the justice system, the Police have a key role to play in helping women to access support services in order to address the problems in their lives. 15% of those arrested in 2016/17 were women. Current estimated policing costs for dealing with women are £1bn.

3.2.5. Forum on tackling serious violence, knife crime and county lines (Feedback from Mr Walker)- This workshop was a discussion group centred around an initiative implemented by Avon & Somerset PCP. The 2018 Home Office Strategy for tackling serious violence places a responsibility on Commissioners to account for how serious violence was being tackled in their plans. The Avon & Somerset PCP arranged an evidence gathering session followed by a planning session to formulate a questioning strategy for the next panel meeting where they could challenge the PCC.

The attendees at the session included panel members, the ACC Lead for Neighbourhoods, a Public Health Consultant, the Police Regional County Lines Co-ordinator, the Serious Organised Crime Project Lead, a data analytics expert and a head teacher from a city academy.

The session identified many complex issues and some of the key considerations were effective engagement with communities, partnership working and how the PCC and constabulary are galvanising the response.

P Darby, K Walker, J Plant.