

Summary of the work of the Cumbria Police and Crime Panel 2014-2016

Over the last two years the Police and Crime Panel has met eight times to discuss a number of issues. Throughout that time the panel has held the Police and Crime Commissioner to account for delivery against his Police and Crime Plan, Confirmed the appointment of a new Chief Constable, scrutinized the Commissioners council tax precept and looked at a number of other issues.

Police and Crime Plan (Discussed at every meeting)

One of the statutory responsibilities of the Panel is to hold the Commissioner to account for delivery against his Police and Crime Plan. The approach the panel has chosen is to receive thematic reports at every meeting on different elements of the plan. This provides the panel with the information they require to perform intelligent scrutiny, and support the commissioner in the development of appropriate services for Cumbria.

In April of each year the panel received the Commissioners Police and Crime Plan for the forthcoming year and during the year the Panel receives detailed reports looking at priority areas within the Plan. Issues covered during this period have included

- **Reducing the impact of alcohol misuse on our communities**

The Panel felt that the paper on alcohol misuse was helpful in that it included data and information, although it could have included how far the business community and licensing bodies were involved in helping with this objective. The impact of events such as the World Cup, or more local events such as Kendal Calling was discussed along with the Constabulary's response to these particular issues.

- **Services for victims**

The Panel has received updates on services for victims. In April 2015 the PCC became responsible for commissioning new emotional and practical support services for victims of crime in their areas and the Commissioner has commissioned Victim Support to deliver victim referral and community services.

- **Restorative Justice**

The Panel questioned the PCC on the roll-out of Restorative Justice (RJ) which is an approach to justice that focuses on the needs of the victims and the offender. During RJ victims take an active role in the process, while offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, to repair the harm they've done— for example by apologizing, returning stolen money, or undertaking community service. In addition, help can be provided to the offender in order to avoid future offences. Restorative Justice that fosters dialogue between victim and offender shows the highest rates of victim satisfaction and offender accountability.

Appointment of Chief Constable (Discussed at May 2014 meeting)

The purpose of the hearing was to review the Commissioner's proposed appointment of Chief Constable, Mr Jerry Graham, following which the Panel would submit a report to him on it. The hearing focused on issues of professional competence and personal independence.

The Panel considered a report, relating to the appointment process which assessed the extent to which the appointment process had been conducted fairly, openly and based on merit. In addition it detailed the extent to which the appointment panel had fulfilled their responsibility to challenge and test the candidate's suitability against the requirements of the role.

The Panel then asked Mr Graham a number of questions relating to his professional competence and operational independence. At the end of the questioning Mr Graham was given an opportunity to clarify any of his questions, add anything or ask the Panel questions.

Following the discussion with Mr Graham the Panel moved into a closed session where they discussed the evidence they had heard, and then voted unanimously to confirm the proposed appointment. In reaching this decision the Panel highlighted a number of key strengths that they believed that Mr Graham demonstrated including:

- A real commitment to Cumbria and its communities and visitors and ensuring that the county remained a safe place to live and visit
- A sound knowledge of both national and local pressures and developments, and clear ideas as to how to work in this context driving continual improvement
- His enthusiasm and willingness to continue to develop new ways of working alongside the more traditional approaches to policing
- A clear commitment to supporting and developing the workforce to ensure that they were trained and equipped to meet changing demands
- Strong personal values and ethics and a clear desire to ensure that the Constabulary worked to build public confidence.
- A positive approach to working in partnership across all sectors within Cumbria

Council Tax Precept

In January of each year the PCP considered the PCCs proposed budget precept. It has become the practice of the Panel to have an informal session with the PCC, the Chief Constable and finance staff from both of their offices together with support from county council finance officers at which members can receive detailed background information to assist them in their decision making on the precept.

Towards the end of 2015 the Government commenced consultation on proposed changes to the funding formula for Police Forces in England. At the October meeting the PCC and the Chief Constable advised the Panel that the potential impact of the changes could lead to a potential £9.5 m reduction in funding for Cumbria Constabulary. In the event the proposals were not proceeded with, however the Commissioner has advised the Panel that it is extremely likely that significant budget reductions will be sought from Cumbria force in the next few years and it is his view that this will adversely affect the service they can continue to provide.

In considering its response to the proposed precept the Panel has the following options for taking a decision :

- Option 1: Support the precept without qualification or comment;
- Option 2: Support the precept and make recommendations
- Option 3: Veto the proposed precept and provide reasons for the veto

For the last two years the PCC has proposed a precept increase of 1.9% and on both occasions following lengthy discussions the proposal was agreed.

The Bridgeway

The Panel has followed with interest the work of the Commissioner in working with partners to fund and provide the Bridgeway centre Cumbria's first sexual assault referral centre. The centre is located at Penrith hospital and prior to its opening victims had to travel out of county.

Other issues.

As well as standard items, the Panel also considers other issues as and when appropriate. Over the last two years this has included

- Complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Regular revenue budget monitoring reports
- Reports from a Member Champion on Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Evidence presented to the Select Committee on standards in public life
- A report from the PCC and Constabularies Audit and Standards Committee
- Details on the roll out of CCTV within Cumbria
- Annual report of the Commissioners Audit and Standards Committee