

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER GOVERNANCE, DECISION MAKING AND SCRUTINY POLICY – OCTOBER 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset (the "Commissioner") is committed to open and transparent governance and scrutiny of policing and crime issues in Avon and Somerset in accordance with relevant legislation (including the Protocol) and best practice in relation to governance. The Commissioner and the Chief Constable both believe that a joint understanding of and respect for each other's roles is a key factor in effective governance and scrutiny activity and have agreed a Joint Vision for working together in the best interests of the communities of Avon and Somerset which is attached at Appendix 1. The Commissioner and Chief Constable have also agreed a detailed Scheme of Governance which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the organisations and officers, the decision making process as well as the relevant delegations and procedures which can be viewed here:

<http://ahqdwss01w.nt.avs/sites/intranet/ForceStrategy/190%20%20Districts%20and%20Departments%20Documents/Interim%20Scheme%20of%20Governance%20-%20PCC.pdf>.

This document is intended to summarise the principles which will inform the Commissioner's governance, decision making and scrutiny process and to summarise the key meetings and focus and priority of those meetings.

2. PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY

The following principles will be applied:

- The governance process will be dynamic, risk based and driven by the agreed priorities set in the Police and Crime Plans and by local priorities and issues identified by members of the public;
- The Commissioner and OPCC will always be mindful of their role in carrying out scrutiny activity and in particular respecting the operational independence of the Constabulary;
- The processes will not be bureaucratic or burdensome but driven by the principle of having the right evidence in the right format at the right time to inform decision making and that an appropriate level of planning and governance is needed to ensure areas of business are covered;
- There will be a shared commitment to transparency and making information publicly available wherever possible;
- There will be scrutiny at a strategic and force wide level but there will also be direct scrutiny and accountability at a local level considering the local Police and Crime Plans and other issues raised by local people;
- Trade Associations and OPCC and OCC staff will be kept informed of issues and involved in planning activity.

3. GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY FRAMEWORK

Governance and scrutiny will be dynamic and risk based as above - below is a framework of the key meetings and engagements which will be used to deliver governance and scrutiny in accordance with the principles.

3.1 Bilateral Meetings and Joint Meetings - the Commissioner and the Chief Constable will meet regularly at least once a week to discuss current issues, performance and joint planning especially around communications. Bullet points of issues discussed will be published on the PCC website. Other officers will meet regularly as required. OPCC Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members and COG members will also be invited regularly to each other's meetings to encourage joint working.

3.2 Chief Officer Portfolio Updates – regular portfolio meetings have been set up between Chief Officers of the Constabulary and the PCC and relevant officers. These cover the following portfolio areas:- Local Policing and Performance; Human Resources; Professional Standards and Equalities; Specialist Operations; Finance and Criminal Justice. Lead officers will prepare work programmes for these meetings to ensure that relevant areas of business are covered. Performance information will be made available in advance and this information and brief 1 page notes of the meetings will be published on the PCC website.

3.3 Scrutiny of PCC Priority/Champion areas - a focus of scrutiny activity will be delivery of the priorities in the Police and Crime Plan. These will inform relevant portfolio update meetings and district and partnership meetings. In addition, the lead officers have agreed particular governance and scrutiny approaches with lead Constabulary officers. The priority areas will also be a key focus of the Quarterly OPCC and Chief Officer meetings.

3.4 OPCC Senior Leadership Team/Chief Officer Group Meetings - the OPCC SLT and COG team will meet quarterly to review key strategic issues including Change Programme, delivery of major projects, delivery of the Police and Crime Plan, strategic planning and consultation. Notes from the meetings are published on the PCC website.

3.5 Public Forum Meetings - the Commissioner and the Chief Constable have agreed a series of 2 monthly public forum events to be held across the force area targeted at members of the public and held in community venues. These will be focused on addressing issues and concerns of local people and will include presentations from the local District Commander and opportunities for local people to ask questions or raise issues. The dates and notes of these meetings including questions and answers will be published on the OPCC website. Feedback and comments from these meetings will be captured and fed into the data which is used to work with the force to influence the quality of policing service.

3.6 District Days and other Local Scrutiny - the PCC and Chief Constable have agreed a series of local visits to Districts. These will be focused on meeting local staff and partners. The visits will include an opportunity for PCC and officers to review delivery of local Police and Crime plans and issues raised by local people.

3.7 Constabulary Meetings - the PCC and officers are generally welcome to attend Constabulary internal and partner meetings including Gold Groups. The OPCC will respect the focus of the Constabulary on carrying out their operational duties and their operational independence.

3.8 Performance Information and Briefings - a single monthly performance information pack and summary document will be produced for the PCC and Chief Constable to inform the management by the force and scrutiny by the PCC.

The Commissioner monitors key performance outcomes at force and district level on a monthly basis via a dedicated PCC Scorecard and supplementary performance pack. This is formally scrutinised on a quarterly basis via a dedicated meeting with the ACC portfolio holder for performance improvement.

3.9 Independent Audit and Audit Committee - a joint PCC/Constabulary independent audit function and committee has been established. The internal audit reports and other committee papers will be published on the PCC website.

3.10 Independent Residents Panel - the PCC has established an Independent Residents Panel to dip sample complaints made by members of the public and dealt with by the Constabulary. The Panel will provide reports to the PCC and Chief Constable which will be published on the PCC website along with a Constabulary (PSD) response.

3.11 Independent Custody Visiting – the OPCC runs a well-established scheme whereby trained volunteers conduct unannounced visits to police custody units to check on the welfare of detainees and observe the conditions in which they are held. Feedback from visits is recorded and analysed. Quarterly reports will be provided to the PCC and Chief Constable and will be published on the PCC website together with the annual report at the end of each financial year.

3.11 External Governance Meetings - the Commissioner meets regularly with MPs, leaders of local authorities and other key stakeholders in Avon and Somerset. The PCC has agreed an approach with the local Community Safety Partnerships to agree joint agenda planning and to table key issues at CSP meetings as well as to monitor effective delivery of projects commissioned through the Community Safety Grant at CSP meetings. A similar approach of agreeing appropriate agenda items is intended to be taken with the Avon and Somerset Health and Wellbeing Boards. The PCC or a member of her team will attend the local Criminal Justice Board which is chaired by the Chief Constable. Papers for these meetings are available online and will be linked from the PCC website. The PCC and Chief Constable will also convene an Avon and Somerset Chief Executives and Strategic Leaders Group.

3.12 Regional Representation - the Commissioner and Chief Constable meet monthly with the other 4 regional PCCs and Chief Constables in the South West of England and have developed a joint vision for working together which is included in the Police and Crime Plan. Minutes for these meetings are available on the PCC website.

3.13 National Representation - the Commissioner has joined the National Association of Police and Crime Commissioners - through this access is gained to various national agencies and groups. The Commissioner has been asked to represent PCC's on the national Policing Oversight Group which is a national group of strategic police leaders. The Commissioner is also involved with the national Probation reference group and the national Police ICT Company.

3.14 Out of Court Disposal Panel – The Panel will independently review a selection of cases that have been resolved by use of an out of court disposal (O OCD) within Avon and Somerset. Its aim is to determine whether the method of disposal is considered appropriate, based on a review of the information/evidence available to the decision maker at the time.

The *Panel* can give feedback at an organisational level to promote best practice and identify potential policy development or training needs for consideration by the force or other agencies. The panel will be made up of representatives from voluntary sector agencies working with victims and youth offenders, CPS, magistrate benches and an independent representative.

The Panel will provide reports to the PCC and Chief Constable which will be published on the PCC website.

4. DECISION MAKING POLICY

Decisions will be made in accordance with the detailed provisions set out in the Scheme of Governance referred to above. In particular, all significant, contentious decisions will be made based on reports in an agreed format published on the PCC's website. Informal decisions of the PCC are also recorded on a separate page of the website where possible.

4th March 2013

**JOINT VISION AVON & SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
AND CHIEF CONSTABLE**

The PCC and Chief Constable share a vision and commitment to make the communities of Avon and Somerset safe, and ensure that they feel safe.

They will work together to achieve this, understanding that their roles are distinct yet complementary. As the Policing Protocol puts it, “mutual understanding of, and respect for, each other’s statutory functions will serve to enhance policing for local communities”.

The Police and Crime Commissioner is responsible for the totality of policing in Avon and Somerset and is accountable to the electorate and to the Police and Crime Panel. The Commissioner will be a prominent, visible, representative voice of the community and will use that position to hold the Chief Constable to account for the actions and performance of the force. It is the Commissioner’s role to take an interest in all areas of Constabulary business, respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and his responsibility for direction and control of the force.

The Chief Constable is accountable to the law for the exercise of police powers and to the Police and Crime Commissioner for the delivery of an effective and efficient policing service. The Chief Constable and the officers under his command are operationally independent: the decision on who to investigate or how to deploy police resources on a day to day basis are things that the Commissioner should never seek to influence.

The Commissioner and Chief Constable are committed to establishing and maintaining an open and constructive relationship, built on straight and honest dealing. Everything that we do should be informed by our joint vision. Although the Commissioner's primary relationship with the Constabulary is via the Chief Constable she will have cause to communicate regularly with all parts of the organisation. The Constabulary will support the Commissioner in discharging her responsibilities by providing information, arranging access to Districts and Departments and contributing to relevant boards and meetings.

The Commissioner and Chief Constable will keep staff informed of progress to achieve this vision as well as other significant developments in their strategic relationship.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has a specific responsibility for the resourcing of Avon and Somerset Constabulary and should therefore be involved at an early stage in key strategic decisions, particularly those relating to significant projects, procurements or contracts. The Commissioner's involvement will include consideration of different options. The Commissioner will also need to be given early notice of any incident, decision or action that would be likely to attract significant public or media interest. It will be normal practice for the Commissioner or her representative to be invited to attend any Gold group that may be constituted to oversee the police response to a critical incident or potential critical incident.

The Commissioner will commission community safety services in consultation with the Chief Constable, co-ordinating external spending in this arena.

The Commissioner and the Chief Constable both have high profile roles in the community and will develop protocols to ensure that these roles, which will occasionally overlap, are complementary. In particular, they will reach an early agreement about their respective public facing roles in the event of a critical incident attracting substantial local, regional and even national media attention.