

LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL
ANNUAL REPORT FOR
THE PERIOD JUNE 2020 TO MAY 2021

Critical success factors

a) The number of public meetings held

The Police and Crime Panel meets in public to scrutinise the actions and decisions of the Police and Crime Commissioner (the PCC). During the period of this report the PCC was Lord Bach.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic there were several non-public test sessions to enable Panel Members to be able to fully participate in panel meetings using virtual meeting platforms. These sessions were aimed at both new and existing Panel Members and were offered to officers at Force Headquarters and OPCC too.

During the period May 2020 to May 2021 the Panel formally held six public meetings by virtual means.

b) Scrutiny documents and publications produced

The Panel's primary means of supporting and holding the PCC to account remains the formal public meetings, with detailed minutes of those meetings providing evidence of those roles.

The confirmed minutes of the meetings held during this period can be found via the following link <https://cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=989&Year=0>

There have been limited opportunities to undertake ad hoc, task and finish type scrutiny activities due to the current Covid 19 pandemic. The panel has shown interest in undertaking a number of visits to observe work and projects funded by the OPCC once lockdown and social distancing measures are eased, in particular to see the work of the Child Exploitation Hub based in Wigston and to visit the Dear Albert project to follow up on the Peer Mentoring work supported by the OPCC.

In March 2021 Panel Members agreed to undertake a review of section 106 funding to scrutinise the effectiveness of arrangements to obtain and use funding from developers to meet community policing needs resulting from new developments. This work will be carried into the new municipal year (2021/22) for completion.

At each meeting the PCC submits update reports providing details of performance for the Force and OPCC, and when required updates on the budget position, significant key decisions to be taken or topical issues.

Areas of concern or where further information or updates were requested by the Panel during the 2020-2021 year included: the increases in domestic violence and whether this was attributable to increased confidence in reporting or the impact of lockdown restrictions; updates on the recruitment and retention of police officers; the approach to policing the lockdown restrictions locally and the expected impact on Police budgets.

The Panel considers such reports and raises any concerns or queries at the meeting as part of its “challenge” role, often requesting further information and updates to future meetings or to be circulated between meetings. As part of their “support” role the Panel are also keen to commend good performance and areas of innovation.

In line with statutory requirements, the Panel continues to write to the PCC in response to his precept proposals, Police and Crime Plan and Annual Report and where appropriate, the Panel’s responses have been published on the host authority and PCC’s website. (e.g. Response to Annual Report at

<https://cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/documents/s115525/Panel%20report%20to%20PCC%20re%20Annual%20Report.pdf>)

c) Engagement with the work of the Panel by members of the public and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicestershire Police

Discussions at meetings and Member development sessions looked at ways in which the Panel could improve upon its work programme and raise its profile, including the suggestion to introduce occasional themed meetings and production of this Annual Report.

The administration of the Panel changed from Leicestershire County Council to Leicester City Council in May 2020 and new webpage content has been added to the host authority’s website (<https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/decisions-meetings-and-minutes/leicester-leicestershire-and-rutland-police-and-crime-panel/>)

together with updated membership details as well as details of future meetings. Provision has also been made on the website for publication of grant funding expenditure information.

All meetings of the Panel are broadcast, and a recording saved that can be accessed for a period before being archived. During the Covid-19 pandemic the Panel continued its business by convening virtual meetings as permitted under section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020, initially via MS Teams Live Events then latterly using Zoom which was streamed to a You-Tube channel set up for Democratic meetings of the host authority.

Panel meetings have gained attention in the local media in the past, but this has tended to be when specific highly topical issues have been considered. The Panel will continue to consider how best to raise its profile.

Since the use of virtual meetings there has been some increase in interest by the public with one meeting attracting 57 views on You-Tube.

In December 2020 the Panel reviewed its Constitution and Terms of Reference which included substantive changes to a procedure for public questions to allow for a protocol for questions from members of the public that allows them to ask their question at the public meeting and to include provision for a supplementary question. At the March 2021 meeting the Panel received its first “public question” under this new procedure.

In the past the Panel has rotated the venue of meetings between the County and City in an effort to increase public attendance. At its meeting on 24th June 2021 the Panel further considered venue arrangements in light of the return to physical meetings as the legislation that permitted virtual meetings ceased with effect from 7th May 2021. At this meeting it was agreed that three of the Panel’s meetings per year should be held at City Hall and three of the Panel’s meetings per year be held at County Hall .

Regarding engagement with the work of the PCC, working relations with the Panel continue to be positive as do the links with the Office of the PCC, such as through the pre-agenda process. E-mail interaction has also proven to be beneficial and positive. The PCC continues to attend all meetings of the Panel to introduce reports and respond to issues raised along with invited contributions from the Chief Constable Simon Cole.

Members of the Panel and support officers have also engaged in wider activities albeit virtually, such as taking an active part in regional and national networks, for example attending the Regional Collaboration workshop arranged with other Panels in the East Midlands and the ninth Frontline Consulting Annual Conference.

d) Future plans and priorities

The Panel continues to develop and maintain an ongoing work programme, and it is hoped that meetings will continue to take place regularly and in public.

There has been much focus on the pandemic and its impact during 2020-21 upon the PCC's priorities and funding, and issues such as domestic abuse and officer recruitment (already the subject of focus from the Panel) are likely to continue to be topical.

Following the PCC elections in May 2021 the Panel will seek to continue to develop positive working relations with the new PCC and has undertaken to form a small working group that will review progress with the new PCC's development and implementation of his Police and Crime Plan in 2021-22.

The Panel will also continue to meet their statutory requirements such as considering the proposed precept and budget and will also be reviewing its Independent Co-opted Membership in 2021-22 agreeing a process for reappointing or recruiting as appropriate.

Recommendation

The Panel is asked to note the contents of this report.

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