

Report of the Conference for Police, (Fire) and Crime Panels in 2019

- 1 The eighth national Conference for chairs, members and support officers of Police (Fire) and Crime Panels took place from Monday 18 to Tuesday 19 November 2019 in Scarman House at Warwick Conference Centre.
- 2 Residential delegates attended a pre-Conference dinner, which included guest speakers, Paul Grady and Iain Murray of Grant Thornton, our P(F)CP project sponsor. Paul and Iain both entertained and informed delegates with an imaginative use of quiz games to explore comparative spend per head of population of police forces and to compare headline themes in various Commissioners' Police and Crime Plans.
- 3 The Annual Meeting of the National Association of P(F)CPs took place, including the announcement of the result of (uncontested) elections. John Gili-Ross (an Independent Member of the Essex PFCP) was re-elected as the Chair of the NAPFCP and gave an annual report. The financial position was reported. A website has been developed. Panels in attendance who are in membership of the NAPFCP agreed not to levy a membership subscription for Panels to join the NAPFCP. It was also agreed to amend the constitution accordingly.
- 4 The opening Conference plenary was a policy debate, exploring key issues on which Panels might provide challenge to and support of Commissioners. Delegates were welcomed by the Chair, Cllr Dave Stewart, Chair of Hampshire PCP.
 - 4.1 The keynote speaker was Dr Rick Muir, the Director of the Police Foundation, who gave an introduction to the Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales. See <http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/project/strategic-review-of-policing/>
 - 4.2 Rick explained that the Police Foundation is conducting the Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales and outlined the objectives and background to the review. He invited Panels to submit evidence. Last time there was a holistic review was a Royal Commission on Policing in 1962, which led to several changes to policing relating to its structure, accountability, complaints arrangements and the pay of police officers. There have been calls for another Royal Commission from some key people, but these have been refused. Therefore, the Foundation has stepped in.
 - 4.3 The Police Foundation decided to undertake the Strategic Review now because:
 - Demand has changed dramatically
 - Although crime overall has dropped, there has been a shift into different types of crime eg cyber crime

- Some types of crime (eg serious violence) are rising with public concern rising too
- Non-crime demand is increasing and is more complex with its links to vulnerability that require a multi-agency response
- The police have suffered a massive reduction in resources – the only police service in the world that has been affected by such drastic cuts

4.4 Other factors coming into play are:

- The police are given a set of priorities by the Home Secretary, but the public has been left out of the discussion around priorities
- People are surprised at what the police actually do, although there has been no explicit change in mandate
- The reforms of nearly a decade ago (that introduced PCCs and PCPs) were made in response to different issues (political considerations, not the growth of cyber-crime etc)
- There is a concern that policing policy has lacked a long-term and strategic focus

4.5 The purpose of the Police Foundation's Strategic Review therefore is to look at:

- The challenges ahead
- The possible nature of the strategic response required to meet those challenges
- The future role of the police service in meeting those challenges
- The changes that are required

4.6 Factors that the Strategic Review will need to consider are:

- Demand – changes and what future demand will look like
- The public's expectation of the police
- The mission of the police in the 21st century
- The police capabilities required to deliver the revamped service
- The resources needed to do so
- The organisation of the service at local, regional and national levels
- The means by which the service should be held to account at these levels

4.7 The Foundation's focus is on England and Wales, but it will be taking evidence from Scotland and international bodies. It will consider the long-term challenges and all the different elements required to keep people safe and secure.

4.8 The Strategic Review is independent, politically impartial, evidence-led and public-facing.

- 4.9 The review is chaired by Sir Michael Barber; its Vice-chair is Sir Bill Jeffrey, the Chair of the Police Foundation. It is also supported by an Advisory Board.
- 4.10 The overall aim of the Review is to set the long-term strategic vision for English and Welsh policing and present substantial recommendations for a modern service that will be capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century.
- 4.11 In the first phase of the review the work will assess and define the challenge the police service should be prepared to face over the coming decades. Contributors are being invited to submit responses to six questions which cover four areas:
- Understanding crime, threat and demand
 - Understanding public and societal expectations
 - Reconsidering the police mission and purpose
 - Looking ahead
- 4.12 The second phase of the review will start in early 2020 and will look at the capabilities needed, resources required, work with partners and other agencies, the structure of policing and accountability.
- 4.13 Before the final report is published in 2021, papers will be published. There will be a programme of events including calls for evidence for both phases of the project.
- 4.14 Rick advised that the Police Foundation already has support for the Strategic Review from a wide range of organisations. It will make significant and substantial recommendations on the back of a credible report. The Police Foundation is talking to a lot of stakeholders to ensure involvement and support.
- 4.15 The Review's (draft) Terms of Reference can be found at:
<http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/2017/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/SR-TOR-draft.pdf>
- 4.16 Following Rick's presentation, he joined a panel with Lorraine Atkinson, a Senior Policy Officer with the Howard League for Penal Reform; Christine Goldstraw OBE, Chair of Nottinghamshire PCP and Paul Grady, Grant Thornton's Head of Police. The panel, chaired by Cllr Dave Stewart, responded to questions and joined in a discussion.
- 4.17 Comments from the panel in response to Rick's opening remarks included:
- Agreement that a strategic review is long overdue
 - Consideration to be given to the fit of policing with the criminal justice system

- Concern that there has been top slicing for national services, yet a PCC is responsible for the totality of policing in their police service area
- Awareness of the range of expectations and challenges eg the public expects the police response to a burglary
- Recognition that the police are a 24/7 service and are really stretched – they have been picking up the pieces and problem-solving and have also been developing real mental health expertise
- Uncertainty as to whether the public is prepared to pay for the police service they need and expect
- Suggestion that the review needs to capture the voice of the young - the 16-25s, recognising and drawing on the role played by social media today
- Recognition of the importance of preparing the talent pool for the future. For example, whether there are apprenticeship schemes for police officers in all police service areas, as in Nottinghamshire
- Concern that public debate is relatively immature – the focus is on inputs rather than outcomes

4.18 Questions to Rick and the other panel members and their responses included:

- What is the panel's take on neighbourhood policing, as distinct from response policing?
 - There is an inherent tension between whether the police should be solely tackling crime or playing a pivotal role in the community
 - Several police services are looking at managing demand, for example around voluntary discharges from Accident & Emergency, and are checking the degree of vulnerability in deciding whether to respond or not
 - It was suggested that protocols are needed to manage this
 - It was reported that Nottinghamshire has good technical communications equipment to enable PCs to be out and about, not stuck in stations
 - It was recognised that community policing is a real challenge and the police need to work out how to balance their different roles
 - Random foot patrols don't deter crime but patrolling in hotspots does
 - The public want 'bobbies on the beat' but this isn't a solution to several problems they might face (eg drugs, rundown town centres)
 - Agreement is needed with various agencies for partnership working

- A comment was made that some problems are not initially a police matter, but might become so. For example, loose horse tethering is not illegal, but it becomes a problem when the horse breaks loose and police might need to become involved
- How effective have PCPs been? Are they not ‘toothless tigers’?
 - A panellist suggested they had limited effectiveness
 - It was commented that a PCP finds it useful to get updates on police performance and it was noted that a PCC values the opportunity to test things out with the Panel since being a PCC can be a lonely position
 - Whilst it may be tempting to think that PCPs are ‘toothless tigers’, it is interesting to note that there has been a shift in PCCs’ views of PCPs since 2012; far fewer comments are heard that PCPs are a waste of time and only indulge in “nit-picking”
 - Increasingly PCCs are finding that Panels are challenging and have been prompting good debates; there is value in Panels using available mechanisms for more in-depth conversations and using their own research to exert an influence on PCCs’ thinking
 - Through a show of hands over two thirds of Panels present indicated that they had questioned their Chief Constable or other police officers, not only the P(F)CC or their Office representatives
 - Rick indicated that as part of the Strategic Review, he would welcome PCPs’ thoughts on the powers necessary to perform their roles effectively
- Will 43 police forces be sustainable in future?
 - Form should follow function, so the Strategic Review is not starting with a pre-determined view about force numbers or structure
 - The issue is how to be locally responsive and accountable whilst also being able to deal with cross-boundary crime such as fraud and terrorism
 - There are huge pressures on policing as crime becomes more complex
 - There also is an increasing need for forces to work together
 - It was noted that the five biggest forces in England and Wales deal with half the crime
 - The problem with larger sized forces is how to be locally responsive
 - When crises occur, there are de facto invisible mergers
 - Structural change can lead to the “eye being taken off the ball”

- It was questioned whether there are resources for such mergers and where the new expertise for dealing with major issues eg cyber-crime should sit
- There was a discussion about how priorities should be determined - and budgets aligned with those. If a measure was the level of harm involved rather than the incidence of crimes as a basis for priorities, sexual crimes would be more of a priority than acquisitive crime. A key issue is retaining the confidence of the public
- Whereas prior to the election of Commissioners, Community Safety Partnerships received their money directly from the Home Office, they are now funded by the local Commissioner. Has this led to issues over funding or the role of CSPs?
 - There is a problem of fragmentation
 - Partnership working is not an end in itself, but a tool to deliver outcomes and those should be the focus
 - Panel members who also sit on CSPs get a good sense of what's happening in their area; however, Panel members bringing very local issues to the Panel is a negative step as Panels should be strategic and focused police service area wide
 - It is positive that CSPs operate at a local level and seek to make sense of local crime issues, but it questioned whether they have the tools to do the job
- What is the definition of 'support' in the Panel role of 'challenge and support'?
 - There ought to be a balance between challenge and support
- Should there be a strategy for recruitment and integration of special constables into the police force?
 - Specials are important, especially bringing in people with skills for issues such as cyber-crime; the review will look at this

4.19 In concluding the policy debate, Cllr Dave Stewart asked Rick Muir for his three 'takeaways' from the session. These were:

- How to hear and include the voice of young people
- Consideration of CSPs role and funding
- Powers required by Panels to carry out the role effectively

4.20 Rick concluded by asking all Panels to respond to the call for evidence for the Strategic Review

5 The afternoon included Conference breakout sessions, focused on good practice and the development of Panel activity. Delegates explored how Panels might better fulfil their roles of challenge to and support of Commissioners and work more effectively. A mix of thematic policy seminars, practitioner led workshops and forums was offered, plus a demonstration of Audio Minutes.

5.1 Tackling human trafficking and modern slavery (Courtenay Forbes, Unseen)

See the slides and <https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/>

5.2 Reducing the arrests of women (Lorraine Atkinson, Howard League)

See the slides and <https://howardleague.org/publications/arresting-the-entry-of-women-into-the-criminal-justice-system/>

Discussion explored whether there is a strategy for women in policing and the criminal justice system. Panels gave examples of diversionary activity with women in Cambridgeshire; women's centres in Avon and Somerset and Wiltshire; and work around domestic violence in Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria.

Participants identified questions Panels might be asking to find out the underlying causes of crime by women. These included:

- Whether poverty is a factor
- What gender informed work is underway in the area
- Whether funding is sustainable
- What Commissioners and Panels are doing in terms of gender informed services
- The work of the Commissioner and the service in signposting to and funding for women's services

5.3 Using the Home Office grant for Panels (Dave Burn, Frontline Consulting)

See the slides and <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Police%20and%20Crime%20Panel%20Guidance.pdf>

- It was agreed that further conversations are needed with the Home Office through the NAPFCP and the LGA about funding of Panels. The discussion could also cover the development of the NAPFCP. There needs to be shared understanding between the Home Office and across Panels about the completion of the new grant returns with the introduction of the three critical success factors. Materials could be shared through the Regional Networks for Panels
- There is a need to set out expected outcomes of the Critical Success Factors, which include the number of meetings held (both formal and informal), training and development undertaken and the success of the Panel in challenging and supporting the Commissioner
- The report can be detailed or merely bullet points; any format is considered to be acceptable

- Future activity could include a focus on challenge, scrutiny, key lines of enquiry and support. Panels should seek to measure the influence they have achieved. There should be more invitations to partner agencies to provide evidence

- 5.4 Preparing for the P(F)CC elections in 2020 (Dr Christopher Kemp)
See the slides and <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/elections-and-referendums/past-elections-and-referendums/police-and-crime-commissioner-elections>
https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/PCC-Doubtful-ballot-paper-placemat-first-preference-only.pdf

- 5.5 Supporting a new Panel (Emma Tombs, Essex PFCP)

It was suggested that new members need a solid induction and be provided with practical information eg key contacts, information about venues. Panel members should be consulted about the type of support they seek. It is useful to conduct a skills audit and refresh of panel activity.

- 5.6 Effective scrutiny (Tim Young, Frontline Consulting)
See slides

Participants shared examples of their effective scrutiny. Points made included:

- It is essential to have a prioritised work programme
- It is important to develop working relationships and avoid an antagonistic relationship with the Commissioner (even if s/he is antagonistic to the Panel). This can take time and persistence
- It is important to work on developing a relationship and building up trust between the Panel, the Commissioner and her/his Office
- It is helpful for Panels to explain the benefits of their role to stakeholders and to sustain relationship building by Panels with those who can assist with their scrutiny function
- It is important to take a holistic approach to the issues eg the Gloucestershire PCP support officer invites Panel members to attend the County Council's mental health and children's annual briefing
- An induction session for new members in 2020 will be essential as well as regular training sessions to help develop the scrutiny function
- Panels need to engage with the Commissioner and her/his Office around requirements for reports including performance management – content, frequency, timeliness and presentation – in order to be more transparent and accountable
- Workshops are used to develop key lines of enquiry and inform Panels' scrutiny of specific issues eg in Suffolk
- Preparing KLOEs and finding the right phrasing is important so the Commissioner is required fully to respond to Panels' enquiries eg not just give a Yes or No answer when more information is required

- Members can work together to develop KLOEs to question how the Commissioner is holding the Chief Constable (and Chief Fire Officer where a PFCC) to account
- Member champions are used eg in South Wales to develop expertise and help Panels to scrutinise the Commissioner. In South Yorkshire, member champions have a deputy for back up

5.7 Forum on rural crime (Khalid Ahmed, Thames Valley PCP)

<https://www.nationalruralcrimenetwork.net/research/internal/2018survey/>

- Rural crime can be defined as any crime unique to rural areas which have a direct impact on communities and the rural economy eg theft of agricultural machinery, hare coursing and fly tipping
- Issues which impact on Rural Crime include a lack of police resources, the lack of frontline police officers and police community support officers, the closure of rural police stations that impacts on police response times, the likelihood there will be fewer witnesses to criminal activity in rural and greater opportunities for criminals to target isolated properties and businesses, County Lines and serious organised crime such as modern slavery and people trafficking and a growing focus on higher crime areas in urban rather than rural areas
- The largest ever national crime survey into crime and anti-social behaviour in rural areas took place to find out how the police can better serve rural communities. Launched by the National Rural Crime Network, it was open to anyone living or working in rural areas and was organised to help build a picture of what is a widespread but often misunderstood issue. Against a backdrop of policing budget reductions and a growing focus on higher crime areas, the survey assessed how crime and anti-social behaviour and the threat of potential crime, affects individuals, financially and emotionally. It also shed light on the human implications of crime and the fear of crime, seeking to explore the impact on individual victims and communities
- A National Rural Crime Network endorsed by eighteen (and possibly eight more) of the UK's Police and Crime Commissioners has been set up to help tackle rural crime more effectively in England and Wales. It will provide an online resource for police, community safety practitioners and others to share information, training and development, access to case studies and link up with other mechanisms for reporting crime and/or suspicious behaviour
- Members of the Thames Valley PCP examined rural crime and its impact on communities. It received a report from the PCC on ways that Thames Valley Police are working to tackle the problem. This included identifying crime groups linked to rural crime and introducing a dedicated Rural Crime Policing Desk. Witnesses included the National Farmers Union and the Buckinghamshire branch of the Country Landowners' Association. The PCC reported that rural crime included serious organised crime and widescale intimidation including human slavery, people trafficking, firearms and metal theft; it was a Strategic Objective in his Police and Crime Plan

- Initiatives by the Commissioner include Thames Valley Rural Crime Partnership; Country Watch; a trackable assets system; a rural crime problem profile formulated by an analyst; use of mobile Automatic Number Plate Recognition; additional mobile cameras; intelligence coverage of the strategic road network, plus key rural locations and a joint partnership funded analyst also covering cross border areas

5.8 Forum on tackling serious violence, knife crime and county lines (Euan Walters, Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland PCP)

See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf

Panel attendees discussed what they have been doing on these issues, shared examples and compared initiatives and resourcing by their Commissioners in relation to combating serious violence, knife crime and county lines

5.9 Forum of police, fire and crime panels (Cllr Gill Mercer, Northamptonshire PFCP)

See https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/10.8%20-%20Guide%20to%20the%20fire%20and%20rescue%20service_WEB-2.pdf

Participants considered the implications for a Panel whose Commissioner had taken over responsibility for the fire and rescue service. They also discussed reasons why PCCs had not taken on the F&RS

5.10 Demonstration of Audio Minutes (Antony Redfern)

See <http://www.audiominutes.com/>

6 The closing Conference plenary focused on reflections from the day's discussions and potential next steps. The plenary was chaired by Edward Leigh, the Chair of Cambridgeshire PCP. Delegates explored key messages from the discussions and considered what Panels might need to help them better to fulfil roles of challenge to and support of Commissioners. There was a Q&A and discussion with John Gili-Ross, the Chair of the NAPFCP and Ann Reeder and Dave Burn of Frontline Consulting, the Conference organisers.

Issues to be taken forward included:

- Panels' engagement with the Strategic Review
- The new grant arrangements

Collaboration and partnership working emerged as a potential theme for next year's Conference including work with fire and rescue services and community safety partnerships. There was no support for a relocation of the Conference to London. A slight increase in the fee will be required. A report will be published