

To: Single Executive Member Decision – Leader of the Council

Date: 29th May 2012

Report of: Head of Policy, Communications and Culture

Title of Report: POLICE AND CRIME PANEL APPOINTMENT OF CITY REPRESENTATIVE

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of the report:

To nominate a City Executive Board member to represent Oxford City Council on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel.

Executive lead member: Councillor Price

Policy Framework: Oxford City Community Safety Partnership Rolling Plan 2012-15
Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy

Recommendation(s):

To nominate the City Executive Board member with responsibility for Crime Reduction and Community Safety as the Oxford City representative on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel.

Appendices to report

Appendix 1: Risk Register

Background

1. Police and Crime Panels are being introduced in every Police Force area to scrutinise the actions and decisions of Police and Crime Commissioners. The Panel is a scrutiny function and not a replacement Police Authority. That role is to be subsumed within the role of the Commissioner who will have executive powers for setting the strategic direction for the police force and community safety (e.g. setting the Police and Crime Plan and budget). The purpose of the Panel is to provide a check and balance on the work of the Commissioner and to enhance public accountability and transparency.

What the Panel must do

2. The Police and Reform Social Responsibility Act sets out a series of legal functions that the Panel must carry out; and these legal requirements are set out in the draft Panel Arrangements Document (a link to this document is provided below).

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/overview_scrutiny/FinalPanelArrangements.pdf

3. The requirements include:
 - Reviewing the draft Police and Crime Plan
 - Reviewing the Police and Crime Commissioner Annual Report
 - Holding confirmation hearings for senior appointees
 - Holding confirmation hearing for the appointment of the Chief Constable
 - Overseeing complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner
 - Reviewing the proposed precept level area (and on this and other matters further regulations are expected from the Home Office)

Powers of the Panel

4. The powers of the Panel are these:
 - Veto power on appointment of Chief Constable
 - Veto power on precept
 - Statutory consultee on Police and Crime Plan
 - Requirements for attendance/and access to papers
5. Primarily they are scrutiny and not decision-making powers, which is very different to the role of the Police Authority. So Police Authority functions around setting the strategic direction for the Force/budget etc will pass over to the Commissioner. The Panel's role is to review and scrutinise and to act as an influencer. However, it does have teeth to hold the Commissioner to account and has powers to veto. The influencing role is crucial in terms of developing relationships with the Commissioner and key partners.

Ways to be effective

6. It is proposed that in order to be best effective the Panel will use:
 - Task Groups - in-depth topic reviews
 - Joined up working with local scrutiny committees
 - Budget Scrutiny
 - Performance of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Plan
 - Public involvement in the Panel's sessions with the Police Crime Commissioner
7. The Panel will not have the same resources as the Police Authority and the budget proposal is for the Panel to have one dedicated scrutiny officer, employed by Bucks County Council.

Progress Summary

8. A summary of the progress made to date (and at the time of writing the report) on setting up the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel is set out below:
 - A Home Office Road Show event was held on 8 February 2012.
 - A Member Steering Group was convened and has met twice on 20 March and 19 April. This group was chaired by Cllr Trevor Egleton from Buckinghamshire County Council. No further meetings of this group are planned.
 - A Joint Committee was established to agree the Panel Arrangements and met on 19 April 2012. All Councils in the Thames Valley gave delegated authority to sign-off the Panel Arrangements on their behalf. This document was agreed unanimously at this meeting.
 - Recruitment is underway for a full time Scrutiny Officer to support the Panel.
 - The Member Steering Group has agreed to the process for recruiting two independent co-optees to the Police and Crime Panel.

Next Steps

9. Actions for the Panel Secretariat:
 - Recruitment for two independent co-optees will take place in mid-May onwards. There will be an open recruitment process with applications invited by a deadline of 30 June. Panel members will shortlist in July (following a discussion on skills gaps by the Panel) and interviews held in early September. This will enable the co-optees to be in place before the Police and Crime Commissioner is elected.
 - Interviews will be held in the week beginning 28 May for the Scrutiny Officer position.
 - An informal briefing session for Panel members will be held on Thursday 28 June 2012. The purpose of this session is for members to be briefed on policing and community safety issues and scrutiny best practice. This will assist members in developing their work programme.
 - A draft Rules of Procedure Document will be circulated to all Authorities for comment by 31 May. This document has been informally reviewed by the Member Steering Group and needs to be formally agreed by the Panel at its first meeting.
10. Actions for all Local Authorities:

- Each local authority to confirm in writing their appointee to the Police and Crime Panel by 31 May 2012. In considering appointments each Authority will have regard to the Panel Arrangements Document.
- Each Authority is invited to submit any written comments by 31 May on the draft Rules of Procedure for the Panel. These will then be taken into account in finalising the draft for the first Panel meeting which will take place on 19 July.

11. Level of risk

A risk register is in Annex 1

12. Climate change / environmental impact:

There are no significant implications for the carbon emissions of our own estate and operations. The wider implications for climate change are “difficult to assess at this time as we will not know the priorities of the new Police Commissioner”.

13. Equalities impact:

There are none at this point. The wider implications for equalities are difficult to assess until we know the new Police Commissioner.

14. Financial implications

Members expenses will be paid for by Oxford City Council from within existing budgets.

15. Legal Implications.

These are dealt with in the body of the report.

Name and contact details of author:-

Val Johnson
Partnership Development Manager
Policy, Communications and Culture
Tel: 01865 252209 e-mail: vjohnson@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers:

Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner Chief Executive Officers' Transition Group Report 'Action on the Police and Crime Panel Update' by Sara Tunbull, Scrutiny Manager, Buckinghamshire County Council

Agreed Panel Arrangements are available in the link below.

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/overview_scrutiny/FinalPanelArrangements.pdf

Further Information

- For the latest information about the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel, including meeting papers, please see the Buckinghamshire County Council website: www.buckscc.gov.uk/scrutiny

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