

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOLS

Communications between the Police and Crime Panel and the Police & Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset

Summary

1. This protocol has been written as a basis for all communications and information sharing between the Police and Crime Panel (the Panel) and the Police and Crime Commissioner (the Commissioner) for Avon and Somerset and their office.

Contextual Information

2. The Panel has been established to support and scrutinise the Commissioner and has a number of specific responsibilities, including the power to veto certain decisions of the Commissioner. The Panel will want to use proactive communications to support the efficient discharge of its responsibilities. There is likely to be media interest in the relationship between the Panel and the Commissioner, particularly on any areas of disagreement.
3. The absence of any co-ordination between the Panel and the Commissioner may lead to public confusion, **reputational damage for both and a deterioration in relationships or a situation where the media tries to play one body off against the other.**

Aims:

4. This protocol has the following aims :
 - to work effectively with the media in both issuing proactive press releases and in responding to media enquiries, to ensure the best outcomes possible
 - provide clarity to the media about the respective responsibilities
 - to maintain and respect the independence of each body; and
 - to avoid either body undermining the role of the other

Principles:

5. In this Protocol:-
 - both bodies agree to provide an embargoed copy / inform each other before any press releases are issued on matters relating to Panel business. This is to enable the other body to consider whether to prepare a response, comment etc;
 - both bodies agree to consider any requests for amendment or correction of media releases before they are issued

- all communications shall have regard to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity and other statutory provisions concerning communications.

Working arrangements

6. A nominated communications representative from ~~Bristol City Council Somerset County Council~~ will meet ~~regularly when necessary~~ with the Commissioner's Head of Communications to discuss up and coming meetings and arrangements. Both the Panel and Commissioner may issue their own statements/comments following Panel meetings subject to the principles set out above.

Publication of agenda and minutes

7. Dates of meetings and meeting papers will be published on the ~~Panel's Host Authority's~~ website. A link to the ~~Panel's host Authority's~~ website will be published on the Commissioner's website.
8. After the meeting any ~~proposed~~ external ~~Panel~~ communications will be shared in advance with the Commissioner's Head of Communications for information e.g: any planned interviews, announcements of key decisions, and timings to ensure a joined up approach.
9. Draft minutes of the Panel will be shared with the Commissioners Office, and the Commissioner and/or her officers will be invited to comment (within reasonable timescales set by the Host Authority clerk) on those minutes where the Commissioner and/or her officers have provided information or been quoted.

B. Communication with the media by individual members of the Panel and the role of the Chairman

10. ~~The Chairman of the PCP (or in their absence, in which case the Vice-Chairman) will be the official spokesperson for the Panel unless a different spokesperson has been identified by the Chairman.~~

~~The Chair of the Panel (or in his absence the Vice-Chair) is the official spokesperson for the Panel unless the Chair approves a specific spokesperson from the Panel in advance. All official communications will be generated by the Host Authority press office on behalf of the Panel.~~

12. ~~If a political member of the PCP wishes to present the views of their own council, on a matter which falls within the remit of the PCP, this should be in line with their council's protocol for communicating with the media and a copy should be sent to the host authority. They should always make it clear that they are speaking on behalf~~

of their own authority. If they wish to make a personal comment on a matter which falls within the remit of the PCP they may do so, subject to making clear that they are commenting in a personal capacity and not on behalf of the PCP.

Other Panel members may present personal comments on any matter which falls within the remit of the Panel, or present the views of their respective local authority in line with the relevant authority's protocol for communicating with the media. It should be made expressly clear that such comments are made either in a personal capacity or on behalf of the relevant local authority. The same principle applies to comments made using social media.

A copy of any formal press statement should be sent to Somerset County Council's press office.

- ~~13. If a co-opted Panel member comments in public on a matter which falls within the remit of the PCP, they should make it clear that they are speaking in a personal capacity and not on behalf of the PCP.~~
11. Bristol Somerset County Council's press office will respond to day to day inquiries from the media by issuing statements and/or arranging interviews with members or officers as appropriate. This will be following discussions with the Chair~~man~~ (or in his absence ~~or unavailability~~, the Vice Chair~~man~~ of the Panel) and the ~~Bristol lead officer for the PCP and Clerk to the Panel~~, in communication with the ~~Commissioners' office~~ Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) as necessary and when appropriate.
12. Issues likely to involve heightened media interest or with potential to affect the reputation of the Panel, the OPCC or the Constabulary will be escalated and all reasonable steps will be taken by relevant officers to communicate as soon as possible and in advance of media reporting with a view to establishing appropriate next steps in consultation with the Chair (or Vice-Chair) and the Commissioner.
13. The media will be invited and are entitled to attend all formal meetings of the Police and Crime Panel unless matters of a confidential or exempt nature are to be discussed. In such circumstances the press and public ~~will~~ may be excluded from the meeting in line with the statutory Access to Information arrangements

C. Review

14. To ensure that ~~these~~ ~~this~~ protocols remains fit for purpose and relevant, ~~it~~ ~~they~~ will remain under continual review. ~~They~~ ~~It~~ will act as a guideline based on the best current assessment of sensible work practice, ~~They~~ ~~It~~ may require amendment in the light of practical experience and, if so, will be amended with the agreement of the Commissioner and the Panel. Any amendments will be recorded in writing.

15. Both parties shall monitor the quality of communication and may request to meet to discuss specific areas of concern. ~~—and the Commissioner’s Head of Communications will normally meet no less than twice per year with the nominated communications representative from Bristol City Council to discuss any specific concerns and in general to discuss any issues they might have in connection with the Communications Protocol.~~

16. The protocols ~~s~~ will be reviewed again in November 2019.

Agreed Jan’13–27th June 2018

DRAFT