

# **~~AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL~~**

## **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL**

### **Summary**

1. This protocol has been written as a basis for all communications and information sharing between the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel (the Panel) and the Police & Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset (the Commissioner) and his office. It covers 2 distinct elements:-

1. Proactive and reactive internal communications between the Panel and the Commissioner about external communications; and
2. The Panel's engagement with the media

Media communications include:-

Proactive press releases,  
Reactive written statements,  
Interviews and opinion pieces,  
Press briefings/conferences,  
Blogs/Vlogs  
Websites  
Social media  
Documentaries and public interest programmes

### **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~~ may wish 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, and reputational damage for both.

### **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:
  - a) Inform each other before any press releases are issued on matters relating to Panel business;
  - b) Provide an embargoed copy; and
  - c) Agree the timescale for requests for amendments or corrections before release

This is to enable the other body to consider whether to prepare a response or comment.

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

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

**Working arrangements**

6. A nominated communications representative from the Host Authority will meet 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 or when a matter of concern arises, 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 website. A link to the Panel'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 eg: 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) on the accuracy of 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 Chair**

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

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. Members should take into consideration any reputational implications for the Panel. 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 the Host Authority press office.

11. The Host Authority 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 (or in the absence of the Chair, with the Vice Chair of the Panel and the Clerk to the Panel, and in communication with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) as necessary and 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 between the parties to agree an approach. 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 may be excluded from the meeting in line with the statutory Access to Information arrangements

**C. Review**

14. To ensure that this protocol-remains fit for purpose and relevant it will remain under continual review. It will act as a guideline based on the best current assessment of sensible work practice. 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.
16. The protocol will be reviewed again in June 2023.

AGM June 2 2022