



Suffolk Police and Crime Panel Annual Report 2014

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Foreword from the Chairman

“I believe the Panel has ‘settled in’ remarkably well, in a short time. This opinion is formed by my recent chairing of a national PCP conference in Nottingham, at which I was able to compare other Panels with that of Suffolk. We have a good relationship with the Commissioner and the informal meetings that the vice-chairman and I have with him, enable frank discussions to take place.

We are all aware of the need to make savings, the Constabulary as much as other organisations. Collaboration is vital to this end and the Panel is very keen that the blue light services work together to provide the efficiencies that are required for future service delivery. It is essential, for any good working relationship, that trust is paramount. I believe we are achieving this.”

PATRICIA O'BRIEN

Chairman of the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

Introduction and Background

This is the second annual report of the [Suffolk Police and Crime Panel](#) (PCP), which was established in 2012 in compliance with the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011. The Panel's annual report covers its activities during the past calendar year.

The [Police and Crime Commissioner](#) (PCC) for Suffolk, Tim Passmore, has responsibility for setting the direction, objectives and budget of the Suffolk police force, and for holding the Chief Constable to account. The Police and Crime Panel's role is to scrutinise and support the performance of the PCC over a range of policy areas, including the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan. The Panel also has a role in the handling of complaints against the PCC and the confirmation of key staff posts within the Office of the PCC.

The Panel comprises eleven elected members of local authorities across Suffolk working alongside two independent co-opted members. Together the Panel members reflect the breadth of communities in Suffolk. Further information is available on the Panel's website at: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-community/working-in-partnership/police-and-crime-panel>.

Other Public Scrutiny of the PCC

Ultimately, the PCCs are held to account by the electorate, with elections every 4 years. In addition, the Suffolk PCC has held various meetings in public, such as his meetings with the Chief Constable every two months, and a series of public forums in each district / borough across the county. There is also ad-hoc direct engagement of public, community groups, councillors, etc. with the PCC or the Panel, and there has been public scrutiny via national Select Committees, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), internal and external auditors and also in the local and national news media.

Who's Who

The members of the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel are:

Cllr Patricia O'Brien	(County Council, Conservative) [Chairman]
Rev. Canon Paul Daltry	(Co-opted) [Vice Chairman]
Mr. Manwar Ali	(Co-opted)
Cllr Alison Cackett	(Waveney District, Conservative)
Cllr Albert Grant	(Ipswich Borough, Labour)
Cllr Peter Gardiner	(County Council, Labour)
Cllr Keith Patience	(County Council, Labour)
Cllr Diana Kearsley	(Mid Suffolk District, Conservative)
Cllr Tim Marks	(St Edmundsbury Borough, Conservative)
Cllr Josh Sayles	(Suffolk Coastal District, Conservative)
Cllr Eddie Stewart	(Forest Heath District, Conservative)
Cllr Rex Thake	(Babergh District, Independent)
Cllr David Wood	(County Council, Liberal Democrat)

[Each of the councillor members also has a named substitute member]

Some part-time officer support to the Panel is provided by the host authority, Suffolk County Council, on behalf of all the Suffolk Local Authorities. The additional costs incurred in supporting the Police and Crime Panel are funded from a specific Home Office grant made available for this purpose.

Panel Activities and Achievements in 2014

During 2014 the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel has held four formal Panel meetings, on 31 January, 25 April, 11 July and 10 October. There was a continuing desire to ensure that these public meetings offered county wide opportunity for participation, and as such the March and July meetings were once again held in Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft, respectively, with the other meetings being held in Ipswich.

Details of the formal meetings and the agendas and papers for them are available online: <http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/index.aspx>. [On that web page, select the link to: 'Police and Crime Panel (Joint Committee)']

In addition to the four formal Panel meetings there is now a regular pattern of holding informal workshops, with available main and substitute members of the Panel, to plan and scope the forthcoming formal meetings.

There have also been several other meetings at various points in the year involving one or more Panel members, such as planning and briefing meetings with the Chairman & Vice-Chairman, informal meetings with the PCC and his staff, a County Council scrutiny forward planning workshop, and national networking events such as the Frontline Consulting third national conference for Police and Crime Panels; three members attended that national conference, including the Panel Chairman, who also chaired the conference. There has also been occasional attendance by one or two Panel members as observers at the PCC's two-monthly public meetings with the Chief Constable.

The Panel's work and achievements in 2014 are summarised as follows:

In January 2014:

- The Panel considered the PCC's proposed Policing Precept for 2014/15, and agreed, by a majority vote, to approve the proposal to take the Council Tax Freeze Grant, which resulted in Council Tax remaining at the 2013/14 level. Further detail was in the Panel's formal report, available on the [Suffolk County Council website](#). The Panel also wrote to the Home Office to express concern at the failure of government to give timely notification to the PCC of the referendum trigger threshold.
- In discussion of the PCC's strategic objective on 'Caring for Victims and Vulnerable People', there was emphasis on the need for an integrated approach, and continuity of funding, to 'break the cycle' of domestic violence and hate crime, and to support victims through their journey. A further review was scheduled to be held six months later to learn from initiatives such as the 'Lowestoft Rising' project.
- The Panel noted the improving performance in solving serious sexual offences. The PCC was seeking a long-term trend in improvement and would review performance at his regular 'Accountability and Performance Panel' public meetings with the Chief Constable.

In April 2014:

- At the Panel meeting the PCC was accompanied by the Chief Constable, one year on from his previous attendance at the Panel.

- In discussion of the PCC's strategic objective on 'Solving Crime', the Panel:
 - agreed that a report setting out the results from a research study on domestic abuse, which was being carried out by University College Suffolk (UCS), be put on the forward work plan for future consideration;
 - noted that the Chief Constable would look at an issue raised regarding Safer Neighbourhood Team meetings in Forest Heath, and agreed to feed in to the PCC any suggestions regarding improving public engagement;
 - requested for the PCC to feed back to the Panel on the Constabulary's timescales for the Serious Sexual Offences Problem Profile.
- The Panel considered the 'PCC's Approach to Ensuring Value-for-Money Property Transactions', and were advised by the PCC that a major property review would be taking place during the calendar year.
- The PCC provided the Panel with an update on the issues surrounding the potential Suffolk and Norfolk collaborative contact and control room. The Panel wished it to be noted that it hoped the PCC, when taking his decision on this matter, took account of the views expressed by the public and the evidence presented to him.
- The Panel considered, but had no further proposals or amendments to make to, its arrangements or to its Rules of Procedure.

In July 2014:

- The Panel re-elected its chairman and vice-chairman for a further year of office.
- The Panel considered the PCC's strategic objective on 'Responding to Emergencies' and recommended to the PCC:
 - to continue to engage with other agencies with a view to establishing an aligned set of emergency response times, including for First Responders, and to communicate this to the public; and
 - to include a section on Major Incidents and Civil Contingencies within the Police and Crime Plan, including strategic communications using various channels such as Social Media, local TV and Radio stations and Town Link Radio.
- The Panel considered the PCC's proposals for achieving savings through the appropriate collaboration of 'blue-light' services: police, fire and ambulance, and recommended that the PCC:
 - recognising what the PCC had already done, to continue to encourage the various agencies to collectively agree an approach for collaborating on blue-light and related services, and to communicate that strategy soon, following on from the PCC raising the matter at the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders' meeting in July 2014; and

- feedback to the Panel on progress with the 'Transformation Challenge Award' and other funding streams looking at enabling collaboration of blue-light and related services.
- The Panel resolved to support the PCC in encouraging the engagement of various agencies to address the blue-light collaboration opportunities.
- The Panel questioned the PCC about multi-agency collaborative support for victims and vulnerable people in Suffolk and about the learning derived from the 'Lowestoft Rising' initiative and how this could contribute towards achieving his strategic objective of 'caring for victims and vulnerable people', and recommended to the PCC:
 - that he raise with other agencies the need to resource and commission 'Change Manager' roles to ensure that appropriate, enthusiastic, driven people could co-ordinate similar multi-agency initiatives elsewhere in the county, especially in the major towns; and
 - seek to influence, at Chief Executive level, the commissioning procedures in the collaborating agencies, to focus wherever possible on local 'on the ground' delivery rather than big out-of-county providers.
- The Panel resolved to support the PCC in addressing the above recommendations.
- The Panel questioned the PCC on the reasons and evidence basis for the PCC's decision not to proceed with the proposal for a Suffolk and Norfolk Collaborated Contact and Control Room (CCR) and Shared Services Partnership (SSP), and:
 - noted that the PCC was preparing a document by the end of September setting out various options for achieving financial savings;
 - requested that this document be shared with the Panel in good time for consideration at the Panel's next meeting on 10 October 2014.
- The Panel received the Police and Crime Commissioner Annual Report for the 2013/2014 Financial Year and noted the positive achievements and good signs during this first full year of the PCC's term of office. However, there were also some concerns, for example regarding the solved rate performance for certain types of crime. The Panel expressed a desire to have access to more in-depth statistical data and detail about the crime performance figures.
- The Panel noted the PCC's support for requests from the Panel to the Constabulary for access to more detailed data, and resolved to advise the Office of the PCC and the Constabulary what type of detailed data the Panel wishes to see; and to receive by email a copy of the Performance report that is produced for the PCC's regular Accountability & Performance Panel meetings with the Chief Constable.
- The Panel recommended to the PCC:
 - that he ensured the high cost of Constabulary removal and relocation expenses, listed in his Annual Report under 'Chief Officers'

Remuneration', was moderated in so far as that was possible in the future; and

- that he continued the focus, and feedback to the Panel, on improving the diversity profile of the Constabulary and any funding initiatives to enable this.

In October 2014:

- The PCC was accompanied by the Chief Constable and the PCC's staff. There was representation also from Victim Support, Suffolk Congress and the Suffolk Community Foundation.
- In the Status Review of PCC Plan Objective 3 ('Preventing Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour') the 23% reduction in anti-social behaviour was noted positively. In addition to Members questions raised in advance in the reports, there were questions to the PCC about closer working with environmental health officers and about data quality.
- In the Financial Savings Update, it was noted that Suffolk Constabulary already is a low-cost force. There was discussion about front line officer numbers, public consultation, more effective working together across the public sector in Suffolk, PCSO powers, further financial savings required, and monitoring the impact of the proposed changes.
- With regard to policing and mental health, it was noted in the meeting that it was World Mental Health Day and that there had been significant training and improvement activity in the Constabulary, and a joint mental health concordat for Suffolk, led by the Health & Wellbeing Board. The Panel requested an information briefing at its next meeting on mental health progress, including independent evaluation of the successful mental health '[triage car](#)' initiative.
- The Panel reviewed the PCC's approach for awarding crime and disorder reduction grants. Feedback from the voluntary and community sector endorsed the PCC's new arrangements and ring-fencing of funding, whilst highlighting the need for further clarity in some areas. The Panel resolved to suggest to the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) that they do a 'before and after' assessment of their funding arrangements.
- With regard to Victims Services commissioning, it was noted that the PCC is working on publication of a Victims Services strategy, and the PCC reiterated his commitment to work with the voluntary and public sectors to address victims' services.

Panel Development

Three of the Panel members and a support officer participated in the Frontline Consulting PCP conference in Nottingham in October 2014. There were 70 participants; a cross-section of PCPs from England and Wales, to share experiences

and learn the lessons from activities to date, and it provided an opportunity for sharing with others the experiences and achievements of the Suffolk Panel. The conference was chaired by, and one of the conference workshops facilitated by, the Suffolk Panel chairman and support officer, respectively.

Panel members and substitute members have been apprised regularly about PCC and Panel related developments, including Select Committee and HMIC reports, and the Suffolk PCC's public meetings.

The Panel's Forward Work Plan

At each formal meeting the Panel considers any updates required to its Forward Work Plan, taking into account that:

- the matter comes within its terms of reference;
- there is a significant level of public interest in the matter;
- it is an issue which has been raised by auditors or other inspection regimes, or is the effect of new government guidance or legislation;
- there is an opportunity to identify and promote good practice, have a positive impact and add value to the work of the PCC.

The Suffolk Panel's forward work plan continues to be focussed around:

- Nominally quarterly formal meetings, with considerable informal preparatory work and stakeholder interactions around these.
- Regular statutory reviews such as the PCC's annual proposed precept (and any formal variation to the PCC's police and crime plan).
- Some topics for more specific focus arising from previous Panel meetings, or matters arising in between the formal meetings.
- A quarterly schedule of Status Reviews focused on each of the (four) strategic objectives in the PCC's Police and Crime Plan 2013-2017.
- An 'Information Bulletin' containing briefing information of potential interest to the Panel (e.g. A summary of PCC Decisions since the last meeting).

Contacts and Further Information

If you would like further information about the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel please visit the website at <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-community/working-in-partnership/police-and-crime-panel>, or contact Suffolk County Council, on Telephone: 01473 265119, email: committee.services@suffolk.gov.uk.