

## Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commissioning Committee

<b>Title:</b>	<b>The Development and Work of the Thames Valley Police &amp; Crime Panel</b>
<b>Date:</b>	29/1/13
<b>Author:</b>	Reece Bowman, Scrutiny Officer – Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel 01296 382548
<b>Electoral divisions affected:</b>	All

### Purpose of Agenda Item

1. To provide an update on the development and current work of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel.

### Background

2. The Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 introduced fundamental change to the way in which Police Forces in England and Wales are governed. The Act replaced Police Authorities with directly elected Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs) that are scrutinised by a Police & Crime Panel.

3. The first PCCs were appointed by voters in each police force area in England and Wales in an election held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012. They took office on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012, inheriting the former Police Authority staffs following the abolition of Police Authorities on the same date. In Thames Valley the successful candidate was Anthony Stansfeld, the Conservative Party nominee.<sup>1</sup>

4. PCC's are required to set out their priorities in a Police & Crime Plan. The intention is that they should not get involved in operational matters; this should instead be left to the Chief Constable, the most senior ranked police officer in the non-London police forces. However, PCCs are to hold Chief Constables to account for the delivery of the priorities in the Police & Crime Plan.

---

<sup>1</sup> Further information on the Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley is available at: <http://www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk/>



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



5. There are other roles that the PCC has to fulfil in relation to the Chief Constable, such as appointing them and handling certain complaints against them. This report is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the powers of PCCs and their interrelationship with their Chief Constable and other key stakeholders; a summary is available on the Home Office website.<sup>2</sup>

6. PCCs are directly elected, so a primary accountability mechanism is an election every four years; if the local electorate is unhappy with the PCC, they can simply elect a different candidate. Between elections PCCs are held to account by Police & Crime Panels (PCPs). In Thames Valley (the police force area covering Buckinghamshire),<sup>3</sup> all 18 local authorities in the area appoint a single councillor to the Thames Valley PCP. Two independent co-opted members were recruited to the Thames Valley PCP, bringing its total membership to 20.

7. Buckinghamshire County Councillor Trevor Egleton is the current Chairman of the Thames Valley PCP, and its current Vice-Chairman is Oxfordshire County Councillor Kieron Mallon. Buckinghamshire County Council is the host authority for the Thames Valley PCP (referred to from here as 'Panel'), meaning that it provides administrative support to it, including line management of its only dedicated resource, the Panel's Scrutiny Officer. There is a small budget provided by the Home Office for the purposes of Panel support and operation. Further information on the Panel is available on its web page.<sup>4</sup>

### **Thames Valley PCP Update**

8. The Panel held its first meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2012 in Reading, a date well in advance of the PCC (referred to from here as 'Commissioner') elections.<sup>5</sup> Various procedural matters were considered ahead of the first formal meeting with the Commissioner, which took place on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012. A Select Committee-style approach was adopted by the Panel, involving all members being engaged in the questioning of the Commissioner. The result was a constructive session that laid the foundation for a productive relationship.

9. As well as questioning the Commissioner for the first time, the Panel also had to discharge one of its statutory duties in considering the Commissioner's then proposed Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley. The Panel questioned the Commissioner on the proposed appointment before agreeing, with one abstention, to recommend to the Commissioner that the candidate be appointed to the position of Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley. The Commissioner subsequently accepted the Panel's recommendation and the candidate, Councillor David Carroll, was duly appointed.

10. At the same meeting (6<sup>th</sup> December) the Panel also had to agree an approach to its handling of non-criminal complaints against the Commissioner, another of its statutory responsibilities. A report was considered that suggested certain delegations to the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, mainly around the initial handling of complaints before – where necessary under statute<sup>6</sup> - they are passed to the Panel to consider. The Panel also agreed to use a Sub-Committee of its members to handle complaints on its behalf.

11. The Panel also set up a Budget Scrutiny Task & Finish Group to examine certain key documents prepared for the Commissioner in time for him taking office, including a draft Police & Crime Plan and associated budget papers. These had to be prepared in draft in advance so as not to delay the business and budget planning process, but clearly the newly-elected

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/police/police-crime-commissioners/>

<sup>3</sup> Including Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.thamesvalleypcp.org.uk>

<sup>5</sup> Information on the PCP, including membership and meeting paperwork can be found at: <http://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=751>

<sup>6</sup> I.e. where they are non-criminal complaints against the PCC

Commissioner would wish to make his own modifications to reflect his manifesto pledges upon taking office.

12. The Budget Scrutiny Task & Finish Group examined these papers in depth; the work of the Task & Finish Group went on to inform the full Panel's scrutiny of the Commissioner's then proposed 2% increase to the precept at its public meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> February. At the meeting the Panel membership unanimously supported the 2% increase. Further statutory duties of the Panel will be fulfilled in offering comment on the finalised Police & Crime Plan at a public meeting in March, and in scrutinising in public the Annual Report of the Commissioner in the summer.