



MAY 2019 (UPDATED DECEMBER 2022)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2012, under the [Police, Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#), South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel was established to support, scrutinise and challenge the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Panel's statutory roles include:
- **Budget and Precept** - reviewing and making recommendations on the amount of Council Tax the Commissioner intends to collect from each household to support policing. The Panel can demand that the proposed amount is made higher or lower (i.e. exercise a veto) but the Commissioner only needs to meet this demand once.
 - **Confirmation Hearings** - reviewing the Commissioner's proposal about who should be Chief Constable and in charge of the operational running of the police force. The panel has the power to turn down the preferred candidate but again they can exercise this veto only once.
 - Reviewing and making recommendations on the Commissioner's **Police and Crime Plan**.
 - Reviewing the Commissioner's **Annual Report** which will outline his/ performance against the Police and Crime Plan.
 - **Confirming the appointments** of senior staff who will be working for the Commissioner, including the proposed Deputy if he chooses to have one, the Chief Executive and Chief Finance and Commissioning Officer.
 - Dealing with **non-criminal complaints** made against the Commissioner
- 1.2 The South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel will be working in support of the residents of Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield to ensure that the Police and Crime Commissioner meets the needs of all the communities that he has been elected to serve.
- 1.3 The Panel is made up of 10 elected members from the four South Yorkshire Local Authorities and 3 independent (co-opted) members. Panel members will work in close partnership, with each other and with other key agencies, to guarantee the best possible policing and crime outcomes for the whole of South Yorkshire.

2. Aims

- 2.1 To enhance public engagement in the areas of community safety, policing and crime.
- 2.2 To raise public awareness of the existence and of the roles and responsibilities of the Police and Crime Panel within existing resource constraints.
- 2.3 To provide timely and accurate information to the public about the Panel through the Panel website and liaison with the media.

- 2.4 To provide a responsive service to the public, via the media, when issues of public interest emerge.
- 2.5 To communicate responsibly with the public, via the media, when both resolvable and irreconcilable differences between the Panel and the Police and Crime Commissioner occur.

3. Audiences

- 3.1 The primary audiences for communications relating to the Police and Crime Panel will be the media (local and regional) and residents of South Yorkshire. It is these audiences that are the focus of this Strategy.
- 3.2 Engagement with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is addressed through a distinct 'Memorandum of Understanding' agreed by both parties.
- 3.3 Communications and engagement with other key partners is addressed either on an 'ad hoc' (as and when basis) or, in the case of the four District Community Safety Partnerships, through a 'Principles of Engagement' document.

4. Strategy

4.1 Website

- 4.1.1 The Panel's primary method of communication with the public will be via the Panel's website – <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/south-yorkshire-governance/south-yorkshire-governance/south-yorkshire-police-and-crime-panel/>

Its main functions will be to:

- Provide an overview of the role and responsibilities of the Panel
- Provide a brief profile on each of the Panel members
- Publish Panel meeting dates, locations, agendas, papers and minutes
- Publish any recommendations or reports made by the Panel (see 4.4.1)
- Provide a source of relevant documents and publications
- Enable members of the public to make comments and suggestions to the Panel
- Enable members of the public to submit complaints against the Commissioner and inform them of the full complaints process.

- 4.1.2 The content of the website will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is both accurate and relevant. However, the amount of information put on the website will be contained to avoid the content becoming un-manageable or outdated.

- 4.1.3 Links to the Panel's website will be placed on the websites of:

- The four South Yorkshire Local Authorities
- The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- South Yorkshire Police

4.2 Complaints

- 4.2.1 The Police and Crime Panel website has a specific page which explains the process for submitting, dealing with and resolving complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner. There is also a comprehensive Complaints Procedure in place.

4.2.2 The Panel's Complaints procedure will not be advertised in official police buildings to avoid confusion about the direction of complaints relating to operational policing matters.

4.3 **Press and Media**

4.3.1 Where the Panel considers key issues such as the budget, publication of the Police and Crime Plan, appointment to key posts, public engagement, community safety etc - a news release will be issued on their own website – and through the host Authority's Communication Department (Barnsley MBC). This will enable the public of South Yorkshire to see what their elected representatives' views are, alongside those of the Police and Crime Commissioner and / or Chief Constable.

4.3.2 The Panel and its members will avoid making any comments to the press which could unfairly discredit partners and/ or damage the Panel's own credibility, especially in cases where the issue in question does not directly relate to the Panel's remit.

4.3.3 Should an individual Panel Member wish to make a comment to the press about a particular issue without consultation with other Panel Members, the Member must emphasise that they are not speaking on behalf of the entire Panel.

4.3.4 The Panel will have overall discretion over the extent to which it involves and consults the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner when preparing and releasing statements to the press.

4.3.5 Where irreconcilable differences occur between the Panel and the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Panel will inevitably need to utilise the media to ensure the public is informed about the efforts it has made to advocate the interests of communities in South Yorkshire.

4.4 **Publication of Panel Decisions**

4.4.1 The Panel is obliged to publish any reports or recommendations made to the Police and Crime Commissioner in relation to:

- The Police and Crime Plan
- Commissioner's Annual Reports
- Appointment of a Chief Constable
- The level of the precept

4.4.2 It is for the Panel to determine the manner in which these reports and recommendations are published. In the majority of cases these reports will be only made available on the Panel website. However, where the Commissioner has not accepted the Panel's recommendations the Panel is more likely to issue a press release on the matter.

4.5 **Public Consultation**

4.5.1 In carrying out its role, the Panel has a duty to check that the Commissioner has consulted appropriately with victims and the public. Due to resource constraints it will not be feasible for the Panel to replicate the Commissioner's approach to this by embarking on its own programme of public consultation.

4.5.2 Instead, the Panel will need to gauge the extent to which the Commissioner has consulted with victims and the public by:

- Seeking information from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner on the Commissioner's consultation and engagement activities, the results of this consultation/ engagement and the impact that these results have subsequently had on the Commissioner's approach.
- Capitalising on any opportunities to meet with members of the public, e.g. via attendance at the PCC's Public Accountability Board, and other public meetings in Panel Members' own Districts.
- Taking into account the perspectives offered by local elected Members, for example, via the Local Community Safety Partnerships.

5. **Timescales**

5.1 The timescales for Panel communications will very much reflect its annual timetable, in terms of final precept/ Police and Crime Plan discussions etc.

5.2 Clearly, there will be an element of responsiveness depending on the activities of the Commissioner and on the occurrence of any high profile policing issues which may require Panel input or comment.

6. **Resources**

6.1 Naturally, the media interest will focus on the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Force itself. However, there are occasions when it may be appropriate for the Panel to issue its own press release or comment.

6.2. The drafting of the press release will be undertaken by the Panel's Support Officer and issued via the host Authority's (Barnsley MBC) Communications Department. Where appropriate, consultation will take place with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner prior to the issue of any press release.

6.3. There is no specific budget set aside for communications, but any work relating to press and media, e.g. the production of the Police and Crime Panel's Annual Report, is met from the Home Office Grant and itemised in the Home Office return and on the Panel's website (under Spending and Performance).

7. **Endorsement**

7.1 This Communications Strategy was provided to all Members of the Police and Crime Panel (by e-mail) on 21st April 2019 with no comments or objections received by the date of publication (12th June 2019) (minor updates made on 13th December 2022).