Date: 30 September 2013

Report of: The Secretary of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

Report to: The West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Communications Strategy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this communication strategy is to raise the profile of the Police and Crime Panel with key stakeholders, the public and the media. The report sets out key messages for Members to consider and the range of communication methods that are used. This report suggests the development of a stand alone and easier managed website and simple branding to enhance communications.

2. Recommendations

The Panel is asked to:

- a) Comment on the suggested communication objectives and key messages;
- b) Approve the proposal to develop a stand alone website for the Panel; and
- c) Note the suggested protocol for Member contact with the media regarding Panel matters.

3. Communication objectives

It is suggested that the Panel's communication objectives are to:

- a. Raise awareness of the Panel: its functions and aims
- b. Explain and clarify the Panel's relationship to the PCC.
- c. Raise the overall profile of the Panel with key stakeholders and interested members of the general population within the region.
- d. Engage with the public to encourage involvement with shaping the work of the Panel.

4. Key messages

It is suggested that the key messages in communicating with the public, external partners and the media will be:

- The Panel reviews and scrutinises the actions of the PCC and decisions asking important questions about how the PCC does his job.
- b. The Panel also supports the PCC supporting him in doing his job effectively.
- c. The Panel has other statutory tasks including to review and potentially veto the proposed Precept, handling complaints about the PCC or Deputy PCC, holding confirmation hearings for key appointments made by the PCC, as well as reviewing the PCC's Police and Crime Plan and Annual Report.
- d. The Panel meets about eight times a year, at venues across the region.
- e. More information about the Panel and meeting papers can be found online at www.birmingham.gov.uk/wmpcp.

5. Target audiences/stakeholders and specific messages

- a. General public Explanation of the Panel's roles and responsibilities (including complaints) and how it relates to the PCCs role, the Panel's future work programme, how the public can contact the Panel/attend meetings /get involved/ ask questions at meetings.
- b. External partners linked to the community safety and crime agenda (Including Community Safety Partnerships, Local Police and Crime Boards, Victim Support, Neighbourhood Watch groups, crime forums, community groups, residents associations, probation services etc.) Explanation of the Panel's roles and responsibilities, key contacts, how the Panel's work will fit in with their own work.
- c. Councils Embedding the Panel's governance arrangements into the district council constitutions, including the annual nominations of Panel Members. How the Panel's work will link with Overview and Scrutiny work relating to crime and community safety.
- d. **Media** Overall promotion of the Panel, who is involved/key contacts, work programme, promotion of Panel meetings and events.

A further report can be brought to the Panel with proposals as to how the panel could engage with a range of partners across the region whose work links to the community safety and crime agenda in order to gain improved local understanding to assist the Panel with their scrutiny role.

6. Communication Methods

A range of communication methods are currently used or available:

- a. Press releases to generate media coverage, advertise meetings and reports published by the Panel.
- b. Website (www.birmingham.gov.uk/wmpcp).
- c. Social media including twitter @WestMidsPCP #wmidspcp
- d. Webcasts of meetings where the facilities exist this could be explored.
- e. Newsletters published online and emailed to contact list
- f. Attendance at open days/ roadshows deemed appropriate to have a Panel presence.
- g. Where there are opportunities to communicate directly with target audiences in relation to particular pieces of Panel work, this will be undertaken as appropriate.

7. Development of a Stand alone Panel Website

The Panel's web pages are a key method of communication. This enables the Panel to meet its statutory duties for publishing meeting papers, publishing recommendations on the precept, police and crime plan, annual report and confirmation hearings, as well as setting out its complaints process.

The Panel web pages are currently embedded in the Birmingham City Council website. There are however a number of disadvantages with this arrangement:

- To breakaway from the Birmingham branding of the website
- To offer users an easier way round the information rather than being restricted to BCC style conventions and menu structure
- To offer a search facility for Panel meeting papers and key document
 no search facilities exist on the BCC site
- To offer more interactive two-way communication with the public not available on the BCC site
- To offer the facility to complete an online complaint form

 The current BCC content management system used to draft and edit web pages and upload documents is very labour intensive and technical.

It is proposed to develop a standalone website for the Panel. The proposed new content management system would be quicker to use and will also give officers the ability to control the timings of postings which is important when liaising with the PCC office on the publication of Panel report on key documents.

Indicative costs will consist of a one-off design (including some simple branding) and development cost (estimated at £3000, but no more then £5000) and an ongoing annual hosting charge of around £600 to Service Birmingham.

8. Branding

As communications are increasingly made electronically and through the website it is important to develop a unique and recognisable identity for the Panel. It is therefore proposed to develop a simple logo for the Police and Crime Panel.

Ideas have been developed and a cost effective way will be found to complete this work part of the work to develop the standalone website.

10. Communication Resources

The following officers support the Panel's communication strategy and media interactions:

Office	Key tasks
Birmingham City Council Scrutiny and Committee Officers supporting the Panel	Publishing meeting papers Website Social Media Newsletter General press releases around the promotion of Panel meetings
Press Office at Sandwell MBC	Liaising with Panel Chair on media requests for comment/interviews. Drafting Panel news releases for the Chair.

11 Media Protocol

Panel Spokespersons

It is important to have spokespersons available whenever they are reasonably needed by the media. This is to ensure the Panel is seen to be responsive and accessible, which in turn enhances its reputation for openness and transparency.

The Panel's spokesperson is the Panel Chair and in his absence, the Vice-Chair.

Individual Panel Members and the Media

Generally speaking the Panel communicates with the media collectively through its agreed mechanisms (its official spokespersons and its officers supporting Panel communications).

When speaking to the media about the work of the Panel, Members should make it clear if they are speaking as an individual Panel Member and as a courtesy inform the Chair.

12. Budget Implications

The cost of developing a stand alone website and branding is set out in Paragraph 7. Otherwise there are no other significant financial implications.

Contact Officer

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