

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF POLICE AND CRIME PANELS

Warwick University November 6th 2017

Organised by Frontline Consulting; sponsored by Grant Thornton.

- 1 The event was very well attended – over 120 delegates. The first conference held four years ago had fewer than a half that number.
- 2 The problems around the Criminal Justice System figured heavily. This was especially important with the demise of the Probation service, the reduction in the number of courts and the reduction in drug and alcohol services. This ‘direction of travel’ makes more and more important crime prevention and the reduction of re-offending.
- 3 Many delegates/speakers talked about the need to seek separate verification for what their PCC was telling them. One even had their HMIC Inspector along to speak privately too them!
- 4 Some PCPs have their Lead Members table questions before meetings for discussion before the PCC joins the meeting.
- 5 One PCP had its PCC present only for about half an hour. The rest of the meeting was spent debating amongst themselves. (I am at loss as to how this could work to ‘hold the Commissioner to account’.)
- 6 An interesting and useful question which one PCP regularly poses to its Commissioner is “How often and on what issues have you held the Chief Constable to account since our last meeting”. I will think about how we might use this approach.
- 7 Several panellists spoke of the need to liaise with the Community Safety Partnerships and also the internal scrutiny process. We have never done that and I will give it some thought.
- 8 There was a PCC on the Panel and he repeated the phrase Angus often comes out with: “This job is not just about policing”. My own response to that is, as you know, “No, but it should be more about policing than it is”.
- 9 One PCP reported that it held two private meetings each year “For Reflection”.
- 10 Another reported that it published an Annual Report (as we did at the end of our first year) and that it always issues a press release after every meeting. This latter is something about which I feel a bit guilty. I will try to address that shortcoming.
- 11 There was some enthusiasm for having Community Safety “All in one place” (and presumably under one hand) – all the blue-light services, the CSPs, YOT, etc etc.
- 12 Panels should spend more time looking at the future shape of policing not simply reacting to the here and now. I have a particular interest in this since I believe it inevitable that forces will become at least regional and possibly even National. That means it’s even more important to work out how a rump of ‘local’ ie neighbourhood or community police could be retained in that environment.
- 13 It is intended to continue with the formation of a National Association of Police and Crime Panels as a Special Interest Group under the auspices of the LGA. I am toying with the idea of volunteering for the Steering Group but it has taken a whole year for it to get this far and I fear the bureaucracy might overcome my patience!

I delivered a Workshop – supported by Adam Brown – on the way we approach the monitoring of Performance against the Police and Crime Plan and the part played by our Performance Dashboard. I think it was fairly well received (a couple of delegates said they were impressed by the Dashboard). But it led to a very wide-ranging, and useful discussion. My thanks to Nicky Dyer and Emily Higson for their help producing a short handout.

Richard Britton

7th November 2017