

Update on PCCs and Police and Crime Panels

Purpose of report

For information and discussion.

Summary

This report sets out the engagement the LGA has had with police and crime commissioners (PCCs) since their election on 15 November, and responds to Members' requests for a comprehensive programme of work to support police and crime panels up to March 2013.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. note the LGA's activity in relation to PCCs and police and crime panels since mid-November; and
2. comment on this and activity planned up until March 2013.

Action

LGA officers to progress as appropriate.

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Background

1. In November, the Board received an update on the outcome of the LGA's discussions with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) on the creation of a joint Strategic Partnership Board, LGA engagement with police and crime commissioner (PCC) candidates, and what was known about the 192 candidates standing in the 41 police force areas in England and Wales outside London.

The PCC elections

2. The elections for PCCs were of course held ten days after the last Board meeting on 15 November. This was the first election in England and Wales to have used the Supplementary Vote system on such a widespread basis. Counting of the votes was completed on Friday 16 November.
3. Conservative candidates were elected in 16 police force areas, Labour candidates in 13 police force areas, and Independent candidates in 12 police force areas. The Liberal Democrats fielded candidates in 24 police force areas. Six of the 41 PCCs are female (14.6%), and there are no Black Minority Ethnic PCCs. Of the candidates elected 22 were current or former councillors, with a number standing down shortly after the elections, and 8 were former policemen. Turnout in the elections averaged 14.94% with the lowest turnout being in Staffordshire at 11.93%, and the highest in Northamptonshire at 19.5%.
4. The low turnout in the elections resulted in a good deal of comment in the media, as did the unusually high rate of spoilt ballot papers. The Electoral Commission announced a review into the elections shortly after they took place and will be reporting to Parliament in the spring. The Board Lead Members wrote to the Electoral Commission in December (attached at **Appendix A**).

LGA engagement with PCCs

5. Following their election the LGA Chairman wrote a letter of congratulation to PCCs offering confidential political support, providing copies of our materials, and a free space at the event we are holding for PCCs on 17 April 2013. Vera Baird the new PCC for Northumbria was also secured as the main key note speaker for the Board's annual Safer Communities Conference at the end of November, one of the first conferences to be addressed by a PCC after their taking of office. Councillor Khan has also written to Deputy PCCs as they have been appointed letting them know about the LGA's services and highlighting our work on metal theft.
6. The Board's Chair, Councillor Khan, was invited to attend the Home Office welcome event for PCCs organised at the start of December, and spoke alongside representatives from the Association of Chief Police Officers, the College of Policing, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, chief executives from police and crime

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commissioners' offices and the chairman of the APCC. Councillor Khan was also able to stay for the drinks reception that concluded the welcome event to speak to PCCs individually. On the same day the LGA also hosted a meeting of the Association of Policing and Crime Chief Executives (APAC²E) – the chief executives of the offices of PCCs.

7. Subsequently the LGA's political group offices have been following up the offer to PCCs in the LGA Chairman's letter about political support. Work led by the political group offices is unique to the LGA and not a service currently offered by the APCC, and would therefore complement the aims and objectives of the Partnership Board. We have also continued to circulate our monthly bulletin to all PCCs, to highlight through weekly case studies the benefits of PCCs and councils working together, as well as circulating briefings on topical issues like the draft anti-social behaviour bill. This activity will continue.

Strategic Partnership Board

8. LGA nominations for the Strategic Partnership Board have been agreed by the LGA's leadership. They are: Councillor Mehboob Khan (Labour); Councillor Marianne Overton (Independent); Councillor Robert Light (Conservative); and Mayor Dorothy Thornhill MBE (Liberal Democrat). Although the original intention was to hold a Member away-day in February to scope out the programme going forward with the first formal meeting of the Partnership Board in April, this timetable may have to be adjusted as the APCC have not, as yet, been able to determine their representation on the Strategic Partnership Board and will probably not be able to resolve this until their AGM in April.

Police and Crime Panels

9. It has been a busy time for police and crime panels since the election of PCCs. Nearly every panel in England has seen their PCC attend a panel meeting to answer questions. A number have also had to hold confirmation hearings mostly for deputy PCC appointments. The joint guidance produced by the LGA and the Centre for Public Scrutiny on conducting confirmation hearings has been extensively used by panels in their preparations, and the feedback from panels suggests the approaches set out in the guidance have been found to be helpful. In the main therefore the hearings have proceeded fairly smoothly, although in one instance there was a robust exchange between the panel and the PCC over the appointment of the deputy PCC. These hearings for the deputy PCC appointments will now be followed by a fairly intense phase of activity for the 10 panels which have to conduct confirmation hearings for chief constables. The LGA will be looking to share the experiences of those panels that have already conducted confirmation hearings more widely.
10. Cllr Mehboob Khan wrote to all the chairs of police and crime panels in England in November setting out the support available to panels from the LGA. This also highlighted the resources that have been published by the LGA over the last year, and the support network for panels that the LGA has established. Guidance from the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) on the handling of complaints against PCCs has also been circulated to host authorities, as has our own analysis of

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the benefits and risks associated with the different options allowed under the regulations for handling of complaints. Again this has proved useful for panels in considering what processes they adopt for handling complaints against the PCC.

11. Additional activity going forward is set out in the attached table at **Appendix B**. It sets out a range of publications, events, peer support that the LGA will be providing to panels between now and the end of March 2013. This will be supplemented by a monthly bulletin to all police and crime panel members in England. We have also been in contact with the WLGA about support for Welsh panels and will be further discussing what assistance the Welsh panels have identified they would like in January.

Conclusion and next steps

12. The LGA will continue to engage with PCCs and panels over the next few months. Given that both PCCs and panels are still learning about their roles and what assistance they want from the LGA there will have to be a degree of flexibility in the LGA's activities to ensure we tailor our response appropriately.

Financial Implications

13. The activity outlined in this paper will be met from existing resources so there are no financial implications arising from it.