

Deep Dive In Leicestershire

Working with Partners and Partnerships

Leicestershire Police Authority was one of four Police Authorities to take part in a Deep Dive. The aim of the event was to help each Police Authority area consolidate their understanding and shape their preparatory work for transition to the new Governance structures, while enabling the Home Office to identify key issues and best practices so that they could be used to help other Authorities during their transition programmes.

Leicestershire's Deep Dive involved intensive consultation with its partners and local partnerships in order to map out the issues, the landscape and preparation required for the establishment of Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs). The findings provide an indication of the key challenges and opportunities from a partnership perspective and highlight the need for focused communication with our partners.

The format followed a series of roundtable discussions and one to one interviews over a four day period. The Authority is very grateful to all those who took part, giving their time and views to help the transition programme move forward. Each session involved partnership representatives of equivalent seniority for parity.

The findings from all the Deep Dives will be issued, by the Home Office, prior to Christmas 2011 and will be used in the national workshops taking place in January and February.

Strategic Leaders Roundtable

This discussion saw contemporaries including the Chief Constable, the Chair of the Police Authority, Leicester City's Mayor and Chief Executives from the Police Authority and Local Authorities, gather to consider what preparations are being made across key organisations ahead of the introduction of the local PCC.

The group looked at the combined approach, the challenges ahead and issues where they felt more support was needed from the Home Office.

It emerged that local stakeholders were keen for more information and involvement in the programme so that they could help shape the changes impacting on policing and the wider family, such as victim support.

The Commissioner's capacity, taking into account the breadth of the role, was highlighted as a potential issue. An early, and critical, example where capacity will be tested to the max was raised, when agreement on the first Police and Crime Plan needs to be reached while simultaneously setting the budget and precept in February, a mere three months after election.

Attendees discussed the requirement for consultation with both partners and the public, questioning how collaborative engagement could be successfully delivered across the local partners.

It was felt that the remit of the Police and Crime Panel was unclear, and while some clarity was able to be provided, it was agreed that this is an area where more local debate is needed to achieve common understanding across all the local authorities.

There were possibly more questions than answers as a result of the discussion, highlighting the need for more guidance and communication from the Centre. It was also clear that greater engagement with stakeholders at all levels is required, which can be driven by the Transition Board.

Police & Crime Panels Roundtable

This session was attended by local authority representatives with responsibility for scrutiny and governance, together with colleagues who chair scrutiny panels.

Information covering the key points regarding the role of the PCC and associated responsibilities was given to all attendees at this session, plus an overview of the scrutiny arrangements through the Police & Crime Panel.

Partners were asked to look at the role of the Panel and consider how they intend to fulfil this responsibility.

It quickly became clear that the partners needed more information and clarity on all aspects of the Panel's work.

Participants were unhappy at some of the terminology, in particular 'lead' authority which it was felt presumed supremacy to that organisation. Consistency is also required, for example, host and lead are currently used interchangeably.

The added factor of an elected Mayor, with an automatic right to a seat on the Panel, brought a new dimension to the discussion, leading to debate on whether the Panel's overall function is scrutiny or executive – or indeed both. As anticipated the size and composition of the Panel was discussed at length and concerns over equitable representation were raised repeatedly.

Participants learned that the panels must be in place by October although there appears to be an anticipation that Shadow Panels will be up and running before then. It was made clear that no funding is available until November.

It was highlighted that communication will play a critical role in public, and partner, awareness and understanding of the Panel's work.

The discussion illustrated that there is some ambiguity and misconception surrounding the Panel. More clarification is needed on many points, or if not, an acceptance that localism will result in Panels of different sizes with different roles and expectations.

PCCs and Collaboration Roundtable

This was a well attended session with participants from a comprehensive list of local stakeholder organisations. Agencies included Community Safety Partnerships, Health, Voluntary Sector, the Local Criminal Justice Board, local authorities, integrated offender management, police and many more.

The aim was to bring together a mix of strategic leaders and senior practitioners to look at co-operative working and the PCC's requirement to work WITH organisations across the wider criminal justice family.

The event looked at what is already taking place in preparation to meet the requirement and tried to identify what type of help and support would be useful going forward.

Representatives from the different health related organisations added a new and welcome dimension to cross-boundary and multi-agency issues.

To ensure that the participants were well informed, the session began with a general presentation, covering the PCC role and the aim of the Deep Dive, focussing on collaboration and commissioning.

People were asked what changes they felt the PCC's introduction would mean; what changes have already begun to take place in their organisations, and how this would impact on their role.

It was evident the Home Office is not attempting to prescribe how organisations should undertake their duties – this is believed to be the responsibility of the Transition Boards.

Current funding arrangements for Community Safety Partnerships were discussed, and the need to evaluate what the money delivers, what works and what doesn't was agreed as a sensible way forward. It was also confirmed that the PCC will hold the CSP grants from 2012-14. This led to discussion on the precept, and whether that could be used to support the partnerships.

The terminology 'have regard to' was discussed alongside the need for a clear definition understood by all Stakeholders. It was agreed that it did not mean the PCC must include all areas of current activity, merely that he or she must have considered it.

Attendees felt there were still many areas where they would like greater clarity - such as the definition of 'duty to co-operate', commissioning and partnership. They also felt it was particularly important to retain local primacy, which must be evident throughout the induction material and pre-election period.

The Home Office suggested that a national template could be developed to help each PCC area focus on the national issues, local perspectives and views from the partners.

It was suggested that possibly separate information purely on policing should be available in pre-election material.

PCCs and Wider Partnership and Integrated Commissioning Roundtable

This event was by special request as some partners felt that a debate on the wider commissioning role of the PCC would be useful and would help to inform the transition work in this area. In particular, it was felt that the information needed to inform potential candidates in the pre-election phase was crucial.

Representatives from all the local stakeholders took part including health, PCT, treatment agencies, third sector, police, drug and alcohol teams and local authorities. The aim was to see how collaborative working across the wider partnership can work effectively in terms of output, outcomes and commissioning.

Presentations about Leicestershire's approach to the development of integrated commissioning and the Community Budget gave plenty of food for thought regarding the way forward in the future.

The event focussed on the impact it is expected that the PCC will have on the wider partnership arena, beyond policing, community safety and criminal justice. This enabled the County's Community Budget pilot, which aims to reduce the number of families with complex needs through joined up working, to be taken into account.

The discussion centred on the prevention of crime, how to tackle crime and reduce re-offending; protecting vulnerable people; contributing to emergency planning; the need to take into account victims of crime, and how to co-ordinate national and regional threats.

Attendees discussed the principles of integrated commissioning and methods of financially based encouragement, for example Payment by Results. The Home Office offered to share several documents on this area and proposed this subject should be considered at the forthcoming national workshops.

It was felt that a skeleton integrated framework, with scope to be developed to accommodate local issues, was a key requirement. This outline could be further developed and completed in line with the PCC's viewpoint once in office.

On a very positive point, it was emphasised that all the partners wanted to remain involved with the work of the PCC and wider police and criminal justice agenda. Looking ahead, participants felt that the PCC should be able to discuss progress in tackling the issues that matter, highlighted through consultation, in a regular or occasional 'round the table' discussion, to make sure that priorities are being addressed.

As in every event, communications and 'buy-in' from the public was considered of paramount importance. In the New Year the Home Office will carry out high level national events, but the expectation for local messages need to be disseminated from local partners was made clear.