

LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

PAPER MARKED

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Meeting **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Date **TUESDAY 22 DECEMBER 2009 – 2.00 P.M.**

Report of **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Subject **AUTHORITY INVOLVEMENT IN CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

Purpose of Report

1. This report proposes a new role for the Police Authority regarding critical incidents. It is suggested this approach is reviewed after 4 months and that an evaluation report will be brought to the Authority meeting in June 2010.

Background

2. The ACPO definition of a critical incident is 'any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community'. This encompasses not only incidents such as murders, which may immediately be seen as 'critical' but, initially, smaller events that have the potential to escalate.
3. Following a HMIC inspection on critical incidents, this Authority resolved by minute 41/09 of 5 May 2009 that one of the four members already vetted to the appropriate level, (then being Mr Rhodes, Mr Roper, Mrs Sherwin and Mr Hyde) be invited occasionally to sit on a gold group for a critical incident or major crime investigation. Mr Render and Mrs Newton have replaced Mrs Sherwin and Mr Hyde for this purpose. Further, one of the areas for improvement raised by the Police Authority Inspection Team in September 2009 concerned the Authority's approach to critical incidents. It is therefore hoped the proposals in this report reflect a rational and proportionate approach to Authority involvement in critical incidents.

Commentary

4. As members will see from the definition above, the term 'critical incident' is wide and gives rise to a number of such incidents each year. In 2009 there have been 13 incidents flagged as a critical incident on OIS for this Constabulary.
5. Many critical incidents give rise to a Gold Group meeting. This will consider the strategic approach to the incident and will include addressing a community impact assessment, resourcing and communications issues. Gold Group meetings may be reconvened as each milestone for the critical incident is approached.

6. Gold Groups can be convened for spontaneously upon a crime occurring or issue arising. Gold Groups can also arise in a more planned way, upon approaching a predetermined event or operation.
7. The Gold Group might also at first or subsequent meetings requisition a review by the Review and Good Practice Team of the Professional Standards Department. This Team can provide a report with recommendations and will often be used to identify lessons to be learned from an incident.
8. The Authority role in critical incidents would appear to be
 - (a) to provide any input on the particular incident from the perspective of the council tax payers in general;
 - (b) to provide any input on the particular incident from the perspective of one or more communities;
 - (c) to ensure that all reasonable opportunities to learn from the incident have been taken;
 - (d) to ensure any Review and Good Practice recommendations that are accepted by the Chief Officer Group are proportionate;
 - (e) to ensure the findings in (c) or (d) are implemented.
 - (f) to have some recognition of the numbers of critical incidents affecting the organisation at any one time.
9. The types of critical incidents to which members can add value by their involvement are those where
 - there is a significant impact on communities
 - a significant level of resources or investment is required
 - there is likely to be a significant impact on confidence in the police service
 - there is a significant risk to the reputation of the Force, or Authority
 - there may be significant implications to frontline policing services
 - the matter has parallels with issues that are currently newsworthy (e.g. public order control of demonstrations after G20, Op Teak etc)
10. As members will realise from the use of the term 'significant' in the criteria above, this, of necessity, will be a judgement call in any particular instance. It is suggested that for a temporary period of, say, 4 months the total number of critical incidents compared to the number in which members are involved is monitored through discussion between ACC (Crime) and the Chief Executive.
11. As indicated above, Gold Group meetings address community impact assessments and communication of relevant details will be made to key individuals. This communication will include to those members of the Police Authority who are linked to the incident either through their lead role for the Authority on a topic, or geographically due to home address or LPU to which they are appointed. Depending on the nature of the incident the timescale (if spontaneous), and the vetting status of the member, this may either be notification to the member or an invitation to attend the Group meeting.

12. The Chief Executive is attending the quarterly meetings of the Review and Good Practice Group which discusses the recent review reports produced. It is chaired by the ACC (Crime).
13. The Chief Executive has also been invited to the monthly meeting of the Reputational Risk Management Group, which has recently been established. Chaired by the ACC (Crime) its terms of reference are "to provide the strategic oversight of all incidents, reports and inspections that have the potential to damage the reputation of the force".
14. The Chief Executive will ensure that he provides feedback on critical incident issues at the Authority Officers' monthly meeting with the Chairman and Vice Chairman. The Chief Executive will also provide updates as may be appropriate to other members, e.g. through LPA Circulars and the Members' Newsletter.
15. The Chief Executive is meeting the ACC (Crime) on 16 December 2009 to discuss the approach further and any relevant issues will be reported orally to the Committee. In particular this will address the revised arrangements being put in place to effectively "store" all relevant documents including action plans so as to enable easier audit by the Authority. In addition, this will address ways for greater Authority involvement in critical incidents without compromising the Chief Constable's command and control obligations and the Authority's scrutiny role. Such matters were outlined to members at the Discussion Day on 3 November 2009.
16. It is suggested that we evaluate how the new system is faring and a report is made to an Authority meeting to consider how to proceed in future.

Recommendation

17. The Authority agree
 - (i) to the proposals detailed in the report as its approach to critical incidents; and
 - (ii) that an evaluation of the first four months of this approach be brought to the June Authority meeting.

Implications

Financial: there is no expenditure as such arising from the recommendations in the report other than occasional telephone and mileage by members. Legal: none. Diversity: diverse communities may be affected in different ways by particular incidents. Risk Management: entire report.

Background Papers

None.

Officer to Contact

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