

**LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL –
23 SEPTEMBER**

VENUES FOR PANEL MEETINGS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out some of the considerations around where in future the Panel may wish to hold its meetings arising from a request from the City Council members of the Panel that some meetings should in future be held at City Hall.

Background and current arrangements

2. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland is an elected official under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The role of the Police and Crime Panel is to review and scrutinise the decisions and actions of the PCC providing support and challenge. Transparency plays a key role in the Panel's approach to scrutiny of the PCC.
3. The Police and Crime Panel is a public meeting and it plays a key role in assisting the public in evaluating the performance of the PCC. The Panel also provides evidence of ongoing support and challenge to local policing and community safety. For these reasons it is imperative that meetings of the Panel are accessible to as many members of the public as possible either by attending in person or viewing a webcast, whilst maintaining value for money.
4. The Secretariat for the Police and Crime Panel is based at County Hall and comprises officers from Leicestershire County Council. This arrangement was agreed prior to the Panel's inception in 2012. The County Council claims grant funding from the Home Office in support of its duties as Secretariat.
5. The current Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel is partly based at County Hall by virtue of being an elected member of Leicestershire County Council. This enables effective and regular liaison between the Chair and the Secretariat.
6. The Police and Crime Panel has thus far held all of its meetings to date in the committee suite at County Hall, Glenfield. Attendance from the public at PCP meetings has generally been low though it is not known whether this is due to the location, the ability to view the meetings on the webcast online or a general lack of interest or awareness from the public for the Panel's role and its meetings.
7. Holding meetings at County Hall might be considered to have the following benefits for both Panel members and those wishing to attend Panel meetings:
 - A location near the centre of the County just outside of the city centre;

- Good quality accommodation and meeting facilities;
- Webcasting facilities which enable members of the public to view meetings – with the aim of increasing openness and transparency;
- Free parking for all members of the Panel and readily available additional parking for non-member attendees;
- Facilities based at the same location as the Secretariat which ensures no time is spent by the Secretariat in preparing the accommodation for meetings;
- Zero cost. The cost for facilitates/refreshments is absorbed within the budget for holding member meetings at County Hall.

Reasons for changing the current arrangements

8. Varying the location of the Panel's meetings may be considered as encouraging a more varied attendance at Panel meetings and broadening awareness for the Panel's work and role. The population of Leicester City is approximately 330,000, with the County having a population of 609,578 and Rutland approximately 38,000 and it is important that all in the Force area have the opportunity to attend and engage in meetings of the Panel.
9. There may be some residents in the Force area who find it difficult to travel to Glenfield and attend meetings of the Police and Crime Panel in person bearing in mind its geographical location. Whilst those with their own vehicle will appreciate the free and available parking facilities at County Hall and avoid city centre congestion, a city centre location would be of greater benefit to those who rely on public transport. Many people travelling from more rural areas on public transport, particularly from the East and South sides of the city would currently be required to change transport in the city centre in order to be able to get to Glenfield.
10. Journalists from city centre-based newspapers and radio stations would presumably find it more convenient if the meetings were closer to the city though it may be the case that journalists in the main utilise the webcast footage for any reporting purposes.

Reasons for maintaining the current arrangements

11. Holding meetings away from County Hall will inevitably lead to an increase in workload and expense for the Panel's Secretariat. Whilst some Panel Members would save money on travelling expenses were the Panel meetings to be held in the city centre, other Panel members and officers from the Secretariat would see an increase in travelling expenses. The efficient and effective running of the Panel's meetings would also be affected by holding the meetings in a location away from the Secretariat's base. The Secretariat is supported at Leicestershire County Council by officers in Member Services who prepare the meeting rooms and order refreshments and parking. The printing off and distributing of any late documents and or communications for

meetings could be impaired to a certain extent by any move away from County Hall as the Secretariat would not have the same level of access to IT facilities at City Hall.

Considerations in holding meetings at City Hall

13. Having discussed with Leicester City Council colleagues the possibility of holding meetings at City Hall, the following details can be confirmed:
 - Webcasting facilities are available at the City Council. A link to the City Council's webcasting page would be provided from the County Council's PCP website. The City Council are happy to provide this footage to the County Council to enable it to be hosted from the PCP's web page for archiving purposes after the meeting has taken place;
 - The PCP will require parking for up to around 22 people (15 members, plus the PCC, police staff, and officers from the OPCC and the County Council). Very limited allocated parking is available at City Hall (6 spaces, plus 2 disabled spaces). These are booked on a first come, first served basis. It has been suggested by the City Council that these spaces are often occupied throughout the day;
 - Nearby paid parking is available at an NCP car park roughly a 6 minute walk away from City Hall on Rutland Street. The charge for parking on a week day between the hours of 12.30pm and 4pm (the most likely time frame for an average PCP meeting) is around £9;
 - Though traffic is naturally a consideration for the location of meetings, it could be suggested that traffic in and approaching the city is notably busier than in most areas of the County. When combined with the parking issues in the city this may affect members' ability to arrive at meetings on time;
 - Room facilities plus tea, coffee and water refreshments would kindly be provided by the City Council at no cost.

14. On rare occasions the Panel has required legal advice in order to carry out its role effectively. This has previously been provided by the Director of Law and Governance (formerly the County Solicitor) at Leicestershire County Council. In order for this to continue to be the case at meetings held at City Hall it will be necessary for the Director of Law and Governance (or nominee) to attend any meetings of the PCP that are held at City Hall.

Views of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

15. The OPCC is based at Force Headquarters in Enderby on the outskirts of the city. In addition to officers from the OPCC, officers from Leicestershire Police also regularly attend meetings of the Panel. Neither have any objection to the principle of attending meetings of the PCP at City Hall.

Considerations in holding meetings at other venues in the County or Rutland

16. There has been no request thus far to hold meetings at other venues in the County or Rutland, however this would require a significant time commitment of the Secretariat to ensure meetings were run effectively. Because of a lack of webcasting facilities elsewhere it is suggested that this should not be considered at this stage, though it could be revisited in the future were other authorities to install these facilities.

Panel make-up and the future approach to meeting venues

17. Given the Panel is made up of four City Council members of its total membership of 15 and there appears thus far to have been little desire from non-City Council members of the Panel to hold the meetings away from County Hall, it would seem to be reasonable to base the Panel's future approach to the meeting venues on the Panel's make-up.
18. Except in circumstances when it is required to meet at short notice (ie. a Confirmatory Hearing) the Panel usually meets six times per year. Given the City Council members represent just under a third of the total Panel membership it might be a pragmatic approach to meet twice per year at City Hall, with the remaining 4 meetings to be held at County Hall.
19. It would assist the Panel's Secretariat with preparations for any meetings held at short notice to continue to be held at County Hall in the interests of making the arrangements as expediently as possible. Similarly, to enable any necessary legal advice to be provided at short notice, it would be beneficial to take the same approach to the Panel's January budget meeting.

Recommendation

20. The Panel is recommended to:
- (a) Hold 2 of its 6 standard meetings per year at City Hall on a trial basis, commencing with the March 2017 meeting of the Panel (ie. the first meeting of the Panel following the budget/precept meeting in January);
 - (b) Review the position at the Panel's final meeting in 2017.

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