

**LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND POLICE AND
CRIME PANEL – 28 MARCH 2018**

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to enable Members to consider whether the Panel should be part of a Special Interest Group (SIG) for Police and Crime Panels and if so how the membership fee should be funded.

Background

2. Since the establishment of Police and Crime Panels, concerns have been raised that unlike Police and Crime Commissioners who have established a National Association, the effectiveness and development of Police and Crime Panels has been restricted by the lack of a collective voice through which representation to Government and the sharing of best practice can be channelled.
3. On 17 August 2017 Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel circulated a consultation paper to all Police and Crime Panels seeking views on the creation of a national representative association and the form that such a body might take. The paper set out three possible options:
 1. An independent National Association;
 2. A Special Interest Group within the Local Government Association;
 3. A combination whereby Option 2 was considered a stepping stone to Option 1.
4. The majority of Police and Crime Panels expressed a preference for option number 2: A Special Interest Group within the Local Government Association.
3. The Chairman of the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel, Councillor Tim Hutchins of Broxbourne Council is leading on the project and a Steering Group meeting for the proposed Special Interest Group has been arranged for 19 April 2018.
4. The Chairman of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Police and Crime Panel Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC has been invited to be a Member of the Steering Group.

Legal framework

5. It is open to any 10 or more full Local Government Association (LGA) Members with common features, interests or concerns to form a SIG subject to approval of an application by the LGA's leadership Board. SIG's are able to make representations direct to government and elsewhere on matters arising directly from their special interest. All SIGs are required to submit a full report at the

end of April each year to the Leadership Board, covering such matters as their dealings with Government departments.

Proposals for the SIG

6. It is proposed that a Chair and Vice Chair for the SIG should be elected on an annual basis with one vote per Police and Crime Panel. Whilst some of the administration for the SIG will be carried out by the LGA the Chair should be able to arrange additional administration through his/her local facilities.
7. Meetings of the SIG would initially take place on a quarterly basis taking into account the desire of most Panels to retain the Annual Frontline Conference. It is hoped that most key decisions will be reached by consensus but where voting is required this should be conducted, as above, on a one vote per Panel basis. Proxy arrangements can be put in place.
8. Terms of Reference for the SIG are proposed to be drafted by the Steering Group. Whilst lobbying for changes in legislation was originally envisaged to be one of the purposes of the SIG, including lobbying for a 'call in' procedure regarding decisions made by Police and Crime Commissioners, more recent discussions have focused on the purpose of the Group being to share good practice.

Issues to consider

9. As part of the feedback to the consultation the following points were raised by other Police and Crime Panels:
 - The Special Interest Group is a format already familiar to members. This option provides the benefits of the LGA's strong links to Central Government and administrative support whilst also being the most cost effective option.
 - There are concerns that the SIG would provide a 'talking shop' that creates a sense of solidarity but no practical change at the Police and Crime Panel level. Any national body must have a worthwhile purpose. Robust terms of reference for the SIG would be required to achieve this.
 - Police and Crime Panels are responsible for scrutinising and supporting their respective Police & Crime Commissioner. Seeking to develop a national focus could detract from the primary purpose of Panels. However, some Police and Crime Panels are of the view that a representative body would give Panels a louder collective voice which would actually contribute to their role of scrutinising and supporting Police & Crime Commissioners, by providing an additional means for issues to be raised and pursued at national level.
 - Any national representation of Police and Crime Panels should complement existing regional panel networks and allow those networks to feed into the overall view that is being presented.

- The SIG would need to ensure that the voices of independent (co-opted) members are heard as well as political representatives.

Subscription fee for the SIG

10. The suggested level of subscription for the SIG is £500 per Police and Crime Panel.
11. The conditions of the Home Office Grant for Police and Crime Panels stipulate that the Grant cannot be spent on activity which influences or attempts to influence government or political parties. Therefore depending on the Terms of Reference for the SIG the subscription fee for the SIG may not be able to be paid out of the Home Office Grant. Councillor Hutchins is of the view that if the Terms of Reference of the SIG make it clear that the purpose of the group will be to share good practice and not to lobby government then use of the Grant for payment of the subscription fee will not be in contravention of the terms of the grant payment. Confirmation on this point is being sought from the Home Office. If the Home Office Grant cannot be used for costs associated with the SIG then an alternative funding source for the £500 subscription fee would have to be found by each Panel.
12. Clarification will also need to be sought on whether travel costs for attending Steering Group and SIG meetings, and officers time, can be funded from the Home Office Grant.
13. The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Police and Crime Panel is comprised of seven District Councils, Leicester City Council, Rutland Council and Leicestershire County Council. Should the subscription fee be divided equally amongst the constituent authorities that would mean a contribution of £50 each per authority.

Recommendation

14. The Panel is asked to consider the following:
 - (a) Whether it wishes to become a Member of the Special Interest Group for Police and Crime Panels;
 - (b) What the purpose and Terms of Reference of the Special Interest Group should be;
 - (c) That if the Panel is minded to become a member of the SIG and the Home Office Grant is not permitted to be used in relation to the SIG, then the subscription fee be met equally by each of the authorities represented on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Police and Crime Panel.

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