



BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Effective communication is key to developing awareness of the Panel and its work and to developing and sustaining the relationships the Panel needs to forge with the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner and his office, partners and the public.
- 1.2 The Panel needs to ensure that it uses the most appropriate channels of communication to reach the wide variety of its audiences. This strategy sets out:
- What the Panel's communications objectives are
 - Target audiences
 - The Communications tools available to the Panel
 - How communications content will be agreed
 - What will be communicated, when and how
 - Monitoring and review arrangements

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of this Communications Strategy are two-fold:
- To raise the level of key stakeholder and general public awareness of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel, its role in the governance arrangements for policing and community safety and its membership.
 - To publicise the ongoing work of the Panel and the recommendations it makes to the Commissioner so that the public and partners know what the Panel is doing and the opportunities that are available for them to contribute to and help shape its work.

3 Target Audiences

3.1 The Panel's principal target audiences are:

- The Commissioner;
- The general public;
- Minority and hard to reach groups;
- Community Safety Partnerships;
- Other external partners including the statutory and voluntary sector;
- Members and staff in each of the three constituent authorities;
- Members of Unitary, Town and Parish Councils/Community Forums etc across the force area;
- Media across the force area;
- Other Police and Crime Panels and Commissioners.

4 Communications Tools

4.1 There are a number of communication tools available to the Panel to use. Care needs to be exercised in order to determine the most appropriate tools to use for any given purpose, in order to ensure that the Panel's message is communicated effectively and reaches target audience(s)

4.2 The following Communications Tools are available to the Panel and will typically be used, depending on which are most relevant to achieve the purpose of the particular communication:

- Panel webpages

As host authority Bedford Borough Council provides dedicated web pages which provide information for the public on:

- ❖ The role of the Police and Crime Panel
- ❖ Panel membership and contact details
- ❖ Panel meetings and agendas, reports and minutes
- ❖ Panel reports to the Commissioner
- ❖ Panel Press Releases
- ❖ The role of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- ❖ Complaints (page currently under development)

The web pages will be updated on an ongoing basis with information about events or developments that relate to the Panel.

The pages can be accessed through the following URL: www.bedford.gov.uk/bedspcp

There are links to this URL from the Panel's other constituent authorities websites.

Media releases sign post the public and other interested parties to the website and will be used to alert the public to Panel meeting dates and business.

- Panel Reports to the Commissioner

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 requires the Panel to make written reports and recommendations to the Commissioner on the following:

- ❖ The proposed precept for any year
- ❖ The proposed Police and Crime Plan and any proposed variations
- ❖ The Commissioner's Annual Report
- ❖ The outcome of confirmation hearings for the positions of Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Chief Constable

and to publish those reports.

In addition the Panel may undertake other discreet pieces of work on which it will wish to submit a report and recommendations to the Commissioner.

The tone and quality of content of the Panel's reports to the Commissioner are as important as the tone and quality of the Panel meetings with him in establishing the basis of the relationship and how that is communicated to the media and the public.

Panel reports will need to strike the appropriate balance to convey its "critical friend" role in holding the Commissioner to account and highlighting areas of agreement and differences of opinion and the reasons.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 provides the Panel must determine how it will publicise reports and recommendations it makes to the Commissioner and must send copies of those reports to each constituent local authority.

As a minimum:

- ❖ any written report/recommendation which the Panel makes to the Commissioner will normally be published on its website and a press release setting out the comments/recommendations it has made will also be issued to media organisations across the force area.
- ❖ Copies of the Panel's reports will be sent to the Chief Executive, Head of Democratic Services (or equivalent) and Community Safety Partnership Lead Officers in each of the Panel's constituent local authorities.

- ❖ The Panel will identify whether any of its reports should be circulated more widely, when it considers the arrangements for their publication.

- Press releases

Press releases are a key means of making the public aware of the Panel and its work and will be used:

- ❖ To highlight reports and recommendations which the Panel submits to the Commissioner
- ❖ To highlight forthcoming items of Panel business which are likely to be of particular public interest
- ❖ To encourage public involvement in the Panel's work – for example by publicising opportunities to contribute to any reviews the Panel undertakes

All press releases/comments/responses will be dealt with in accordance with the prevailing media protocol agreed with the Commissioner's office and will be issued by the host authority's Communications Team. Any quotes included on behalf of the Panel will be in the name of the Chair or, in the Chair's absence, the Vice-Chair. All press releases will be published on the Panel's webpages and sent electronically to Panel Members on the day of their release.

- Social media

The Panel will, where appropriate, utilise social media accounts used by constituent authorities.

- E-bulletins/briefings

E-bulletins and briefings will be used to improve awareness and understanding of the Panel's role and work amongst partners across the statutory and voluntary sector and to promote opportunities for those sectors to be included in the Panel's work.

- 4.3 The Panel Secretariat, supported by the Host Authority's Communications Teams, will make recommendations to the Panel about the most appropriate tools to use having regard to the nature/ purpose of the communication concerned, but the Panel itself will determine the communication methods to be used in each case.

5 Agreeing the content of Communications

- 5.1 All Panel Members will be given an opportunity to comment on any material issued in the Panel's name wherever possible. Where there is insufficient time to consult all Panel Members, the Panel Secretariat will consult the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel before liaising with the appropriate communications team to issue any publication, press release, or press comment.
- 5.2 At the end of each meeting the Panel will consider whether, in addition to any reports to be submitted to the Commissioner, it wishes to publish information about any of its other business and how that should be published.

6 Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 The Panel's Secretariat will monitor all Communications' activity on behalf of the Panel and will submit reports to the Panel on communications activity and outcomes.
- 6.2 The Panel will review this Strategy on a four yearly basis, unless there is a need to do otherwise.

ACTION PLAN

<u>Target Audience</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Communications Methods</u>
General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role, membership and work of the Panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel webpages – regular updates • Information in Parish and Community newsletters • Panel Annual Report
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for involvement in the Panel's work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel webpages – regular updates • Information in Parish and Community newsletters • Press releases
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for contributing to specific reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases • Social media • Direct engagement appropriate to review (eg focussed public meeting)
Commissioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working constructively together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel reports • Panel press releases
Community Safety Partnerships and other External Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping to shape the Panel's work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct contact with CSP leads and lead LA officers when consulting on work programmes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to be involved and feed in views on Commissioner's draft plan, budget, annual report etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek feedback/views as part of Panel's consideration.

<u>Target Audience</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Communications Methods</u>
Local Authority Members and Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and further develop awareness of Panel's role and work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Panel Press Releases and reports to constituent authorities • Articles in staff bulletins and briefings • Panel's Annual Report to be considered at Council meeting • Consider introducing more frequent reporting back to constituent authorities.
Members of Town and Parish Councils/Community Forums etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of Panel's role, work and membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-bulletin for Town/Parish clerks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping to shape work programme and contributing to individual reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include in consultation on work programme • Ensure aware of opportunities to contribute to individual reviews.
Other Police and Crime Panels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of Panel's work and recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel website • Effective links through lead officers' network.
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of Panel's work and recommendations to the Commissioner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases • Panel reports

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