

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

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CC Amelia Christopher, SCC

6th October 2021

Dear Cllr Kennedy,

Thank you for your recent email to Kelvin Menon (copied to me) which raised a number of issues around transparency, 'key decisions' taken by the PCC and the OPCC's Forward Plan. Your questions follow on from the discussion at the Police & Crime Panel. I will endeavour to address your various points below:

Key Decisions

You have asked for clarification of what constitutes a 'key decision'. All PCCs are required by the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) Order 2011, to publish "*a record of each decision of significant public interest arising from the exercise of (their) functions*". We refer to these as 'key decisions'. Unlike a 'key decision' made by a local authority, where a definition is usually found in the Council's Constitution, there is no set definition of what constitutes a key decision for a PCC over and above something that is deemed of significant public interest. We do however, set out in our Scheme of Governance what will likely be included, namely:

- Setting an annual Police and Crime Plan
- Setting the police budget and precept requirement
- Appointing, dismissing, disciplining and appraising the Chief Constable
- Allocating grants for crime reduction or victim support initiatives in the area
- Consulting with the public and victims on priorities and budget
- Collaboration with others to achieve efficiency and resilience
- Financial decisions that are not delegated to Surrey Police

Key decisions taken by the PCC are published on the OPCC website in the interests of transparency and so that they can be reviewed by the Panel.

The OPCC Forward Plan

Separately, we publish a Forward Plan which includes those upcoming 'key decisions' that we either know, or expect, that the PCC will take. The Forward Plan also includes significant actions and decisions for the wider office. It does not therefore translate that items on the Forward Plan will always result in a 'key decision' by the PCC. There may also be additional key decisions that arise and are taken in faster time and have not therefore been included on the Forward Plan. Such decisions are, however, still published.

Whilst I am content that we have met the requirements around transparency of decision-making, we will look at the structure of the report provided to the Panel to ensure it is clearer in future where an item on the Forward Plan has not resulted in a key decision.

Turning to the specific examples you raise in your email:

- Deputy PCC appointment and date of decision (31/2021): the date of 19th July refers to the decision to use reserves to pay for the Deputy PCC post, rather than the decision to appoint a Deputy. As the Panel will be aware, the previous PCC did not have a Deputy and therefore there is no provision in this year's budget to fund the post, hence the use of reserves.
- The agreement of a Concordat with the Chief Constable: this was included on the Forward Plan in anticipation of an incoming PCC wishing to sign a concordat with the Chief Constable. There is no requirement to do so and the current PCC is of the view that the relationship between PCC and Chief Constable is sufficiently well defined within the Policing Protocol.
- The approval of the PCC's Allowance Scheme: this was approved in late May (and the decision published) and should have been removed from the June forward plan.

Follow-up questions

You have set out a number of more detailed follow-up questions which we have addressed below:

1. *Clearly the DPCC appointment covers nearly 9 months of the current year, so a salary cost of just over £40k, and needs to include add-ons such as NI/pensions. However, the figure of £70k still seems quite high. Can you please explain what else is in there? Are all the DPCC on-costs in the £70k recurrent from 8th July (or 19th July?), so that the annualised cost would be £95k, or are there any one-off costs in this figure?*

The allowance in the decision was the salary and on costs (NI, Pension) for a year based on a salary of £55k. This is an over provision as it should have been for 9 months rather than a year but this can be adjusted at the year end. There are no other costs within this figure.

2. *You didn't specifically mention the strategic comms advice at the Panel meeting so this came as a surprise, particularly as the PCC already has a strategic comms background and the OPCC already has a media officer. Is this one-off advice from an external consultant (if so, which consultant, when were they appointed, and for what period?), or by an additional member of OPCC staff (if so, when was the appointment and is this an employee or a secondee?)?*

The PCC has appointed an external agency, 56 Degrees North, on a fixed-term 6-month basis, to provide the Office with strategic communications advice. This appointment was reported in the decision notice 31/2021 and, in line with procurement rules, required us to obtain and assess a minimum of three written quotations.

Following her appointment, the PCC was of the view that the existing communications provision within the OPCC was not sufficient. The appointment of 56 Degrees North has provided additional capacity and resilience to the team which has proven particularly beneficial during a time of staff absence.

3. *Can you confirm which adviser is giving the property advice, when they were appointed, and for what period? Is this one-off advice relating to the HQ review on top of the funds released by 37/2021?*

The PCC has overall responsibility for estates but has limited internal expertise in this area within the OPCC. An external property advisor, Vail Williams, was appointed by the previous PCC, on a call-off basis to provide independent, professional advice as required. This has been important during the significant 'Building the Future' project. The amount is to cover these costs as they arise and none of this sum has been used so far. This is separate to the decision detailed in 37/2021 which refers to the Strategic Assessment to determine the future HQ plans, being led by Surrey Police.

- 4. *You mentioned that the analyst is an extra member of staff to analyse data for grant applications, which I guess is expected to be recurrent spending? Again when was the appointment, and is this an OPCC employee or a secondee? How was this analysis paid for and undertaken under the previous PCC?*

The Strategic Analyst post was appointed by the previous PCC on a temporary secondment basis in late 2020. This was in recognition of the ever-expanding statutory role of the PCC in commissioning projects and services to support victims of crime and to submit bids for funding opportunities such as the recent Safer Streets fund. The post ensures that the OPCC is able to inform and evidence its commissioning work and also monitors and reports on the performance of services to support future decision-making.

This individual's contract has now been extended on a temporary basis. If it is decided to make the position permanent this will be included within the 2022/23 budget.

- 5. *Was this extra spending reflected in the Q1 monitoring forecast £0.5m deficit for 2021/22 (36/2021), or will it be reflected in the Q2 monitoring report?*

The extra spending is reflected in the Q1 monitoring statement. However, as it is funded from reserves it does not impact the bottom line.

I hope that addresses all the points raised in your email and provides some assurance around our transparency arrangements. I am copying this letter to the Committee Manager at Surrey County Council so that it can also be shared with the wider Panel.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Bolton



Alison Bolton
Chief Executive
Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Surrey

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