

Briefing for Police and Crime Commissioner

Topic: Scrutiny Panel Process

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Purpose of briefing

To brief the PCC on the processes of the OPCC-owned external scrutiny panels. These panels provide the OPCC with a strong link between communities and public scrutiny of their police force.

Background

Scrutiny

The OPCC has ownership over a variety of external scrutiny panels and the overarching External Strategic Scrutiny Governance Group (ESSGG).¹ The panels tend to look at either process or outcomes but are not limited to this. External Scrutiny Panels play a role in our accountability processes as an office, allowing staff to identify potential concerns and monitor solutions. External scrutiny has also benefitted from sharing best practice with other forces and understanding what the OPCC in Durham can do to enhance these practices.

There are occasions when the PCC will want to carry out specific scrutiny and evidence will be collated from various accountability pools in order to do this legitimately and effectively. For example, one would draw from force performance data, scrutiny, and partner information to address broader issues around domestic abuse.

Recent history

Scrutiny falls under the umbrella of accountability. It is an instrument which contributes to our overall holding to account and to some degree our community engagement. The ESSGG has recently come into place, it was felt both in the OPCC and in force that oversight over external scrutiny groups would provide a crucial link between suggested outcomes and monitoring of these, as well as ultimately resolution. This group will make a significant contribution to identifying shared themes (both of concern and best practice) and enhancing our understanding of the wider external scrutiny picture.

The scrutiny process enables the OPCC to drive organisational learning and service improvement which addresses those effectiveness and efficiency aspects of PEEL. It also provides the aforementioned link between communities and their police force and allows us to consider ethical dimensions of policing which both address the legitimacy aspect.

Current issues

While we incorporate community concerns into our scrutiny processes e.g. via complaints and then cross-scrutinise these there is scope to widen our community engagement capability within scrutiny e.g. focus groups around shared themes.

The ESSGG is currently in its trial phase but it is expected the Group will remain in place.

¹ Rape; Domestic Abuse; Hate Crime; Independent Custody Visitor Scheme; Ethics Committee; Complaints; Magistrates Court and Out of court disposals; BUS panel – BAME arrests, Use of Force and Stop and Search.

Decisions needed

None at present.

Partnership involvement

Various partners attend our scrutiny groups e.g. Councillors, magistrates, third sector partners etc.

Police involvement

The Force share data with the OPCC for the scrutiny of cases. While most administrative procedures are carried out by OPCC staff, the Force provide redaction/ pixilation services and act as technical conduits for police systems which must be used in the Panels. In some of our Panels the Force also provide subject matter experts.

People to meet

Key individuals:

OPCC: Sharon Caddell CEO, James Atkinson, Jeanne Trotter, Sweety Sahani

Durham Constabulary: Various police SPOCs for respective panels