

Power check: Building on successes for PCPs

Report of Frontline Consulting's fifth national conference for Police and Crime Panels on 20 October 2016

Hosted by West Midlands PCP and sponsored by Grant Thornton UK LLP



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Foreword

In a time of increasingly changing expectations, more complex crimes, fewer financial resources and greater demands on how police prioritise their time and collaborate with partners to achieve outcomes for the public, the role of accountability within the police has never been more important.

This is compounded by the fact that emerging partnership arrangements and untested governance frameworks mean accountability methods need to rapidly change to keep up with progress on the ground and remain effective. With the recent elections of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in May, some Police and Crime Panels (PCPs or panels) are working to consolidate their accountability arrangements with an incumbent PCC, while others are working with newly elected individuals with different agendas from what has come before.

With this as a backdrop to PCPs continuing to provide invaluable challenge to and support for their PCCs, our fifth PCP conference provided opportunity for panels to network, share good practice and explore significant strategic and operational challenges in policing and governance.

The conference theme was ‘Power Check: building on successes for PCPs’, in direct reference to the Grant Thornton and Frontline Consulting report which set out findings of a Spring survey of PCPs, PCCs and chief constables assessing the effectiveness of PCPs during their first term. These findings helped shape the day’s programme and informed the conference discussions.

This report captures the keynote speeches and workshop discussions, and offers ideas for PCPs to take forward in their own force areas.

Keynote session

Learning the lessons of the past: creating a more positive future¹

Professor Rod Morgan, Professor Emeritus of Criminal Justice, University of Bristol

Professor Stephen Shute, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Resources, University of Sussex

Professors Morgan and Shute have jointly undertaken a study into inspection and accountability in the criminal justice service. This included working with HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) on whose advisory group they both sit. They both have a long involvement in the delivery of criminal justice services and the study of that delivery. In presenting the findings of that study they noted that while we want to avoid historical analysis and should focus on the here and now and immediate possibilities for the future, it is nonetheless important not to ignore the lessons of the past.

To set the scene the assumptions regarding the work of PCCs and PCPs are:

- Brexit has changed the whole climate in which policing, as all other public services, operate. We have, not least, a new set of ministers, finding their way.

The Chancellor has indicated that austerity may be less of a watchword in future, that more is likely to be invested in infrastructure, and a more interventionist approach adopted in sectors put under pressure as a result of Brexit. But it is highly unlikely that the planned cuts to policing expenditure will be revised upwards or that the general pressures on local authority spending will greatly change. The cuts in these spheres will continue to be searing.

- The key provisions of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 are here to stay. Despite their initial hostility, the opposition parties have largely capitulated over PCCs and will not give priority to amendment. If further change is to come the likely source will be this Government adding to the responsibilities of PCCs, either generally, or in the 'big beast' mayoralty cities. Further, in the unlikely event of the Government losing a General Election, the opposition parties will probably push policy in the same direction.
- There is no longer much appetite in Whitehall for micro-managing through the setting of numerical targets, the delivery of services such as policing (as

¹ This is an edited version of the address delivered at the conference by Rod Morgan, Professor Emeritus of Criminal Justice, University of Bristol and Professor Stephen Shute, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Resources at the University of Sussex.

under New Labour). The current mood is for central government to determine the size of the resources pot, rely on professional agencies to set general standards (the College of Policing) and monitor quality (HMIC) and push responsibility for managing delivery downwards and outwards. The pressure will continue to be to do more with less and to stop doing things that are expensive but relatively unproductive in terms of reducing harm.

Alongside the political context, there are also criminological assumptions:

- Policing is only to a very limited extent about the police, in the same way that the incidence of crime has only marginally to do with the sentencing policies of the courts. Most crime is only known about or cleared up if the public tell the police it is happening and ‘whodunit’. Most policing is done by members of the community for themselves.
- Likewise the incidence of crime has as much to do with social services, housing, employment and health policies as anything done by the criminal justice services. It follows that any sensible discussion about policing policy must encompass the policing responsibilities and impacts of adjacent services.

- Finally, even when the focus is on the police, it is clear that they engage in activities which go far beyond a narrow traditional notion of what policing entails. The modern police, in other words, do much more than simply investigate crime and apprehend criminals.

PCPs

The function of PCPs is clear. As HMIC has no jurisdiction to inspect and report on PCCs – in sharp contrast to its previous powers over police authorities – PCPs are one of the main ways in which PCCs can be held to account. The most significant form of accountability being the ballot box, since PCCs must be re-elected to office at the end of a four-year term.

PCPs are, therefore, primarily scrutiny bodies. In addition to contributing to the development and review of a PCC’s statutory Police and Crime Plan and making recommendations on that, PCP members’ powers include assuring themselves that police resources are effectively, efficiently and fairly deployed and reviewing and making recommendations on the annual report of the PCC. Crucially, PCP members have local discretion over whether they adopt a ‘light touch’ or a more interventionist stance to their scrutiny function. The Local Government

Association (LGA) has explained two different approaches that a PCP might adopt:

- **reactive scrutiny** is a distant form of scrutiny. It focuses on the formal statutory role of a PCP. It requires it to look back over how local services have been delivered in the past and use that learning to advise a PCC for the future. For the LGA, this approach can have the disadvantage of duplicating the PCC's own internal systems. It can also potentially interfere with or duplicate the work of HMIC.
- **proactive scrutiny** engages with policy development contemporaneously. It seeks to influence policy decisions before they are made and goes beyond what is required by the legislation. For the LGA, this offers PCPs a way of delivering on their responsibilities to support PCCs in policy development. Its potential Achilles' heel is that it depends for its success on "a strong working relationship between the PCP, the PCC and other local partners" involved in responding to crime and disorder.

While keen to remain formally neutral between these alternatives, the LGA has set up the discussion in a way that appears to favour the latter approach.

Local partnerships

Good partnership working is not only key to a proactive approach to scrutiny by the PCP – and indeed probably the reactive approach too – but also to the success of a PCC. From the start, the expectation was that PCCs would work closely with local partners. Co-operation with others was central to their role. An example of that comes in section 10 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 which imposed a duty on PCCs to co-operate with the local Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) so as to ensure that the objectives of the Police and Crime Plan are realised.² There is also a further duty under the legislation for the PCC to work with other criminal justice bodies in their area.³

² See section 10(2) which requires the "elected local policing body for a police area" and the "responsible authority under section 6 of the Crime and disorder Act 1998" to "act in co-operation with each other".

In some areas, the PCC has become the chair of the local Criminal Justice Board (CJB). This has happened, for example, in Sussex, where Katy Bourne, the Sussex PCC, chairs the local Sussex CJB. Bourne is, unsurprisingly, very positive about this development. In her view, it has made “service provision more effective than the sum of its parts”.⁴ Bourne is also optimistic about the prospect of PCCs taking on new responsibilities. She has written that the first term for PCCs “exceeded expectations, with many PCCs delivering improved services locally and influencing the criminal justice system nationally” and she looks forward with relish to the prospect of “further blue light collaboration” which is already under way in many areas. She also welcomes the imminent passage of the Police and Crime Bill through Parliament.

In the West Midlands, the PCP has been keen to exploit the valuable resource that the local CJB offers. It is exploring how the PCC and other criminal justice agencies are

co-operating in ensuring that there is an efficient and effective criminal justice system in the West Midlands. This will involve meeting with the PCC, probation, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and other criminal justice partners, to help both the PCC and the partners agree how best to achieve this, and the role of the panel in supporting this.⁵

In Wiltshire, the PCP has also explored work in this area. A recent agenda item at one of their meetings was to “receive a verbal report on progress at the Wiltshire CJB in reducing the incidence of cracked and defective trials” and in enhancing “the victim and witness experience”.⁶ At a previous panel meeting, the PCP questioned its PCC on his declaration in his ‘Annual Report for 2015/2016’ that he wanted to work with the Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board to develop “the culture of collective responsibility and ownership for the entire victim journey and the performance of the entire system”, by asking him simply

³ See section 10(3). Section 10(5) defines ‘criminal justice body’ as (a) the chief officer of police for that police area; (b) the Crown Prosecution Service; (c) the Lord Chancellor, in exercising functions under section 1 of the Courts Act 2003 (duty to ensure efficient and effective courts service); (d) a Minister of the Crown, in exercising functions in relation to prisons (within the meaning of the Prison Act 1952); (e) a youth offending team established under section 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998; (f) a person whom the Secretary of state has made contractual or other arrangements, under section 3(2) of the Offender Management Act 2007, for the making of probation provision; and (g) the Secretary of State, in making probation provision in accordance with arrangements made by the Secretary of State under section 3(5) of the Offender Management Act 2007.

⁴ Katy Bourne, ‘Delivering locally and influencing nationally: how PCCs are shaping the criminal justice system’, 5 October 2016, Reform, ‘The reformer blog’, reform.uk.

⁵ See Item 10, ‘Proposed inquiry: ensuring an efficient and effective criminal justice system’, WMPCP meeting 21 November 2016.

“how?” The only answer the panel received from the PCC was that a Wiltshire strategy had been drawn up.⁷

Nonetheless, there is still some way to go before local partnership working could be said to have become a successful and embedded feature of our national criminal justice system.

Lessons from history

Whether it be the experience of the PCCs introduced following the Scarman Report in 1991 or the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (subsequently known as Community Safety Partnerships) instituted by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, all the evidence demonstrates that partnership is a word easily bandied about but much more difficult to operationalise with positive effect. Different agencies have different cultures, languages and priorities, nor are they subject, despite all the political rhetoric, to the same policy pressures from Whitehall. For example, the appointment of

PCCs is often cited as an expression of the Government’s general commitment to devolved responsibility for service delivery and enhanced local, democratic accountability. Yet other criminal justice services have simultaneously been centralised, stripped of local accountability mechanisms or broken up. The Courts and Tribunal Service has been wholly centralised and its inspectorate (first championed by Roy Hattersley in 1991⁸) abolished and the shape of the Probation Service fixed within the Ministry of Justice and a large part of it privatised.⁹

Secondly, of all the criminal justice services, the police service is the most formidable for outsiders to engage with. It is by far the largest of the criminal justice services and for non-criminal justice services its highly professional, uniformed, paramilitary character and mystique make it an intimidating partner. The police inspire deference and are generally happy to be given it. The experience of local partnerships

⁶ See the minutes for 1 September 2016.

⁷ See the minutes for 16 June 2016. Avon and Somerset PCC has also expressed an interest in this area, submitting a bid to the Home Office Transformation Fund in partnership with the Avon and Somerset CJB to secure funding to deliver a ‘whole system’ review of the local criminal justice service, with the aim of improving the experience of victims and driving locally-tailored service transformation. The bid was unsuccessful in the first round of funding.

⁸ See ‘Charter of new rights pledged’, *The Times*, 3 October 1991, which reports Hattersley as saying: “There would be [under a Labour Government] an inspector of courts with the task of dragging the administration of justice into the twentieth century”. Hattersley added that: “Judges who find that an unacceptably revolutionary proposal will have no obligation thrust upon them to remain on the bench until their eightieth birthday”.

⁹ See Le Vay, J. (2016) *Competition for Prisons: Public or Private?*, Bristol: Policy Press, Chapter on the Probation Service. And Senior P. (2016) ‘Privatising Probation: The Death Knell of a Much-Cherished Public Service’ *Howard Journal*, Oct.

can be of the police dominating; they have the focused, presentational capacity and can fill any leadership vacuum which other agencies leave. Successive evaluations of formal partnership arrangements involving the police at local authority level over the years are not exactly replete with striking examples of agencies other than the police delivering innovative service delivery change, and some agencies – the health service being the most conspicuous example – have generally been notable by their absence from the table (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, for example).¹⁰

Thirdly, in order to make partnerships work effectively (including partnerships with local community safety partners and local Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees), good information sharing is essential. This is true of information flows to and from the PCC and to and from the PCP. Strong communication together with the necessary understanding, skills and time to analyse effectively the information that is transmitted in either direction is a *sine qua non* for success.

The results of the Frontline Consulting and Grant Thornton survey of PCPs were therefore unsurprising.¹¹ The overwhelming majority of panel members (93%) believe their limited powers are a key barrier to their success. Less than half of members (41%) consider themselves very or extremely effective. What is lacking, however, even for this minority is any measure of what ‘effective’ signifies or practical examples. Effective in terms of gaining a better understanding of policing policy and developing an ability to transmit that understanding to a wider public, thereby strengthening public confidence? Effective in having an impact on the shape of the police and crime plan and the delivery of police services? Effective in somehow facilitating enhanced co-operation between the police and other agencies, thereby improving the delivery of crime prevention generally? What is lacking in these survey results are case study examples of practical outcomes – demonstrations that police and crime plans and the delivery of policing services have been enhanced as a result of the PCP consultative process.

¹⁰ See HM Inspectorate of Constabulary thematic report ‘*Calling Time on Crime*’, 2001.

¹¹ *Power check: reviewing the effectiveness of police accountability – insights for the second term*, Frontline Consulting and Grant Thornton, June 2016.

¹² *Good practice for police and crime panels: guidance document*, LGA, May 2015, p. 6: “One of the reasons for [the challenge of ensuring that panels are properly supported by a local authority] is inadequate government funding. Panel members raise this as one of their main concerns about their ability to be effective. Panels have questioned whether their funding allocation is sufficient to carry out their accountability and scrutiny duties effectively”.

The complaint from some PCP members of limited powers and a lack of resources echoes observations made by the LGA in 2015.¹² These issues can become particularly taxing if something serious arises such as the suspension of a chief constable by a PCC.¹³ They doubted whether, in the current climate, these pleas would result in change unless there is a clear recognition that any revised legislative framework will deliver enhanced community safety with fewer resources.

Further, on looking at the LGA guidance on panel membership, the lack of emphasis given on the need to ensure that panels include members with genuine experience and expertise in some aspect of crime reduction was startling. Perhaps all PCPs should be chaired by one of their independent co-opted lay members. Certainly all PCP members should become “experts in local government scrutiny”.¹⁴ But the lack of other relevant expertise within a PCP’s membership inevitably forces it to turn to the resources of the local authority. As one panel member said to the

LGA: “We rely heavily on the work of the county council officers. We have the monitoring officer and the head of legal that we can turn to as well as a brilliant committee administrator.” It does not follow, however, that all PCPs are so well served. It is also unlikely that all PCPs have followed the advice of the LGA and established “clear terms of reference” which set out exactly what a PCC will be held to account for.¹⁵

It is clear, therefore, that there are many challenges to reaching a point where local partnerships in criminal justice areas are truly effective. Reporting recently on six areas in England and Wales – Kent, Dyfed Powys, London, Durham and Cleveland, Wiltshire and Northamptonshire – HMIC, HM Inspectorate of the Crown Prosecution Service and HM Inspectorate of Probation found that there was little evidence that these partnerships, often chaired by the police or by the PCC, were visible, accountable and influential bodies working successfully to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system

¹³ The LGA’s 2015 report, p. 6, gives the example of Lincolnshire where the PCC suspended the Temporary Chief Constable and the PCP, unconvinced that the decision to suspend met the criteria contained in the Police Regulations, decided to fully examine the event: 55 people had to be interviewed and a detailed report had to be produced.

¹⁴ *Good practice for police and crime panels: guidance document*, LGA, May 2015, p. 8.

¹⁵ *Good practice for police and crime panels: guidance document*, LGA, May 2015, p. 8.

at a local level. Nonetheless, the inspectorates were adamant that there was “a compelling case” for agencies to “come together, with common purpose and specific aims” and called for the “local and national criminal justice landscape to be reviewed and refreshed” and asked for a “new vision for partnership working”.¹⁶ This is a view with which we concur.

Youth justice: a case study on policy development

This case study of a policy development might inspire the Government to introduce change when it comes to the PCC framework. During the last eight years there has within our criminal justice system been a dramatic revolution which has received almost no publicity: it has been achieved almost by stealth, and deliberately so. Governments of left or right are not keen to stimulate the accusation that they are going soft on crime, which any response to crime which places less reliance on arrest, prosecution and condign punishment risks. Remarkably, there is little media attention being given to the transformation of our youth justice system.

There are currently 861 children and young persons in custody, that is, aged 10-17 being held in young offender institutions, secure training centres or local authority secure homes. This is less than one third of the number of children who were in custody when Rod Morgan left the Youth Justice Board in 2007; there were then around 2,800 children in custody. Even more dramatic is the reduction during roughly the same period in the number of children and young people being drawn into the youth justice system for the first time – down from 110,000 to 20,500 per annum, which is more than an 80% reduction.¹⁷ These are breath-taking reductions and they have been accompanied by substantial reductions in costs, youth custody being a very expensive commodity. Young offender institutions, a secure training centre and several local authority secure homes have either been closed or their functions changed. So, for example, the largest young offender institution in the country, Ashfield in the West Country, is now an adult prison.

¹⁶ *Working in Step? A Joint Inspection of Local Criminal Justice Partnerships* by HMIC, HMCPSI and HMI Probation, October 2015.

¹⁷ The latest statistics on youth justice can be accessed from the website of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

How has this quiet revolution been achieved? It is a complicated story, which has involved the following:

- Abandonment by the Coalition Government of New Labour's totally counter-productive numerical targets for Offences Brought to Justice, which encouraged the police to pick the low hanging fruit of relatively minor youth offences and criminalise the children responsible
- Closely analysing decision-making and statistics locally, particularly in areas with high incarceration rates, thereby creating heightened awareness of the costs of criminal justice interventions
- Pathfinder projects to encourage early interventions – for example, the appointment of triage staff in police stations and enhancing the use of restorative justice – which might serve to divert youth cases from prosecution
- Justice Re-investment grants – that is, giving local authorities start up grants to be spent on support arrangements upstream of the criminal justice system, which monies the local authorities were allowed

to retain if downstream costs reduced

- Incentivising local authorities to develop community care and support packages by transferring the costs of custodial remand decisions from central to local government
- Encouraging collaboration between local authorities with such schemes so as to reduce administrative overheads¹⁸

No one is going to pretend that current child safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory, as the recent National Audit Office report made clear.¹⁹ But with respect to child offending they suggested that we have made huge progress and are saving considerable sums of money. Those who are magistrates will know that Youth Court caseloads have substantially dried up.

The reason for citing this saga is that there are clear lessons here which could be deployed in relation to the less serious categories of young adult and adult offenders. It was anticipated that ministers will be looking in this direction in order to address the costly and disastrously ineffective situation now prevailing in the

¹⁸ For an early account of the transformation in youth justice see Rob Allen (2011) *Last resort? Exploring the reduction in Child Imprisonment 2008-2011*, London: Prison Reform Trust.

¹⁹ National Audit Office (2016) *Children in Need of Help or Protection* London: NAO, 12 October.

sphere of probation and prison services. The Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) proposed just such a scheme in February.²⁰ It argues that:

“City mayors or groups of local authorities, in consortia with their Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) should be allowed to bid for control of the custody budget for all offenders who come from within their area and are serving a sentence of less than 24 months. Ideally, the budget they are given would be set for a period of at least three to four years.”

What IPPR propose is along very similar lines to those successfully deployed in relation to youth justice.

The policy direction of the new Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, or the Justice Secretary, Liz Truss, is unclear. However, the Justice Secretary has a major problem with an adult prison population still bursting at the seams and teetering on the edge of major disorder problems, and drastically reorganised probation services which the early indications suggest may not be serving us well. More indicative perhaps was Theresa May’s speech in February 2016 to Policy Exchange, the think tank which

first proposed the appointment of PCCs, when as Home Secretary she said:

“After the May elections, the Government will set out further proposals for Police and Crime Commissioners. Because as a number of PCCs have argued, youth justice, probation and court services can have a significant impact on crime in their areas and there are real efficiencies to be had from better integration and information sharing. We have yet to decide the full extent of these proposals and the form they will take, but I am clear that there is significant opportunity here for PCCs to lead the same type of reform they have delivered in emergency services in the wider criminal justice system.

And alongside the expansion of PCC responsibilities, the development of powerful directly-elected mayors provides a fantastic opportunity, where there is local agreement and boundaries make sense, to bring together policing with local transport, infrastructure, housing and social care services under a single directly-elected mayor. I know many PCCs have engaged with local proposals, and I would encourage them to continue to do so – because I am clear that PCCs’ consent is a prerequisite for the inclusion of policing in any mayoral deal.”²¹

²⁰ IPPR (2016) Prisons and Prevention: *Giving Local Areas the Power to Reduce Offending*.

²¹ May T. (2016) ‘Putting People in Charge: future of Police and Crime Commissioners’ speech delivered at Police Exchange, 4 February.

There is little doubt that these propositions will remain on the table. All of which suggests that, whatever role PCP members have in the future, they will and should take a more proactive policy direction which will place a premium on panel members having experience, and some expertise, in an aspect of crime prevention – whether that relates to social services, mental health, education or housing – as well as the criminal justice services. Indeed, it's recommended that all PCPs carry out a skills audit of their members to ensure that they have the right mix of skills to deliver what they intend to do. Without that they won't be able to respond to the rapidly changing external criminal justice landscape.

PCP reflections on the speeches

The following points and questions were briefly covered in the discussion that followed.

Youth justice

- In light of the Parliamentary debate that was taking place at the time of the conference on the conduct of Sir Philip Green, the BHS pension fund deficit and the BHS sale, do the panellists think that health, housing and economic circumstances are more important than the criminal justice system in influencing levels of crime?
- Were more sophisticated levers in operation to achieve the reduction of 90,000 offenders in the youth offender category, or was such an enormous reduction in reality explained by a difference or failure in recording or classifying offences?
- What are the 'ingredients that need to be in the pot' to enable the replication of the youth justice revolution in the adult justice system, and what is the potential contribution a PCP might make to this?

Complexity of PCCs' current remit and its imminent extension

Participants raised a number of concerns about the complexity of the current landscape in which they and PCCs were operating, and the current ambitions by central government for and the challenges inherent in the extension of PCC powers to cover emergency services:

- How might PCPs effectively support the transformation of services, particularly with a complex landscape of partners?
- Are the current powers and terms of reference of PCPs fit for purpose, given changes to the powers of the PCCs?
- Will devolution and the introduction of elected mayors for combined authorities mean that there will be a conflict between those mayors and their PCCs in terms of supremacy over criminal justice and policing?
- How far should blue light collaboration go and should there also be a more direct relationship with the ambulance services?
- A comment was made about the apparent pressure from the Government on local authorities to ensure that fire and rescue services also come under the remit of the PCC.

The skills of panel members and panel composition

A concern was expressed that was closely related to the PCCs' expanding remit, which was focused on the implications for panels' composition and skills. It commented on the scale of the challenge that would face PCPs when PCCs take on additional responsibility (in whatever form) for emergency services, and the value therefore of checking that panels have the necessary skills and experience to deal with the consequential enlargement of their own responsibilities.

This raised a number of questions:

- How representative are PCPs, given they are there to be the voice of the people?
- How might the suggested skill set of the panels be achieved, given the current numbers of elected Members compared with the number of co-opted independent members?
- How might PCPs become more effective, achieve a better skills mix and have greater continuity of membership?
- Do panels need to become full-time and paid for their work, given the complexity of the PCC's role and the potential significant changes in the criminal justice system?

Suggestions mooted included:

- Councils sending the same representative, rather than changing according to changes in its political balance, in order to overcome a lack of continuity and consistency of membership
- The benefit of increasing the number of independent members

For some members, though, some nagging doubts about PCPs and their abilities remained:

- Why should the public care about PCPs?
- How can a PCP be effective when it lacks teeth, for example when the PCC ignores a panel's views about a deputy PCC appointment?
- Should not the public understand what panels do and be interested in their work? Is this necessary in order for panels to be a prominent voice in their communities, exercising influence and being effective?

Panels' challenges in undertaking proactive scrutiny

While the majority of panels now undertake proactive scrutiny, some PCPs also raised a number of points about the difficulties – both general and more specific – of doing so:

- How can we engage more PCP members in proactive scrutiny when there is a reluctance to sit on task and finish groups?
- How can the PCP deliver proactive scrutiny without cooperation from the PCC?
- How can panels effectively scrutinise contracts that are awarded to voluntary bodies and ensure they are properly constituted and trained so that they can provide the right standard of support in the absence of an agreed national standard?
- How might we determine where the support is for vulnerable people who have speech difficulties eg in using the 101 service?

Sharing good practice examples

Concern about sharing good practice and working together was expressed by several PCPs:

- How can PCPs share good practice?
- How might a PCP learn from others' experiences, eg Health and Wellbeing Boards?
- How can PCPs work together so that more powers might be granted?

Some cited examples of good practice were:

- A task group on blue light collaboration
- Meetings of chairs and vice-chairs from neighbouring police force areas
- A finance sub-committee that meets throughout the year between panel meetings

Frontline Consulting currently supports two regional networks – for the East Midlands and Eastern regions – which meet twice a year to share experience, learn lessons, collaborate on joint activity and receive updates and information, from each other and from Frontline Consulting. Good practice examples and other information of interest is also regularly posted on the website run by Frontline Consulting specifically for PCP members and officers: PCPs-direct; see www.pcps-direct.net

Keynote session

Policing accountability and expectations: devolution, collaboration and some insights from ‘Power Check’

Paul Grady, Head of Police, Grant Thornton

Iain Murray, Grant Thornton

Tim Young, Senior Lead on Policing and Crime, Frontline Consulting Associates

Wider sector considerations which are relevant for the second term and some findings from the survey (Paul Grady)

In the context of unprecedented financial challenge, changes in the nature, type, scale and complexity of crimes – cybercrime, child sexual exploitation, modern slavery and terrorism – have posed challenges to police forces up and down the country. They also have an effect on public expectation.

However, the devolution and collaboration agendas present the opportunity to tackle some of these challenges in a new way. The question is whether police forces and PCCs are capitalising on them and how effective they are being with the finite resources they possess. Devolution, driven by the Treasury, is a means to shape localities. Police forces have a key role to play as a ‘shaper of place’ but it is unclear what role the police are to

play or are playing in these local devolution discussions. Collaboration, especially blue light collaboration, is a major agenda led from the Home Office and has its own complexities.

The present day challenges and opportunities have meant an evolution in the risk faced by police forces. Major police transformation programmes, partnership and collaborative working, coupled with the aforementioned financial challenges mean that traditional assurance, governance and accountability mechanisms may not be adequate in addressing these new associated risks.

The accelerated pace of change in the police sector has affected public expectations. There is not always a clear consensus on what the police should do or what the police are for. The challenge is exacerbated by competing priorities and expectations from the different groups that we call ‘the public’: regulators, local government, cross-sector partners, service users, and staff, among others. To gauge these expectations, seeking public involvement is commendable; however, you could end up with a new state-of-the-art £200 million research vessel called “Boaty McBoatface” if you let the public have its way, unfettered. The National Environmental Research Council (NERC) found this out when they invited

the British public to vote on the name of their new research vessel. In the end, the NERC went with a more respectable name – the name which received the lowest number of votes. While this is a humorous example, it demonstrates the important point that public bodies need to position themselves to shape and mould expectations upfront for those expectations to remain realistic ones. Similarly, it is important for the police to have a role in shaping and managing, rather than simply responding, to public expectations.

Expectations are not a popularity contest. A lot of what the police do is highly contested. The public can have unrealistic expectations of the police. Public opinion can be incoherent and contradictory. It is important for the service to lead, not just follow, public opinion, particularly when it comes to difficult decisions. This is equally the case when managing expectations in respect of the police role regarding vulnerability. Protecting the vulnerable is not the sole responsibility of the police, and it is critically important for the police to work effectively with, and shape the expectations of, the partners with whom they need to work to achieve effective outcomes. If one accepts that society needs local policing to be aligned and, where appropriate, integrated with other local public services, to improve outcomes, then

it is critical for the police to be at the table, able to shape and influence the expectations inherent in achieving those outcomes.

Devolution is one such opportunity for forces to influence the expectations placed upon them by their partners and, ultimately, the public in the locality.

Police forces are key actors in any local area and it seems a significant oversight not to ensure they are firmly included in devolution discussions. The benefits of devolution are clear: the opportunity to pursue innovative new approaches and build place-based and outcome-based services, rebalancing central government spending, invigorating local democracy, and creating opportunities for businesses to be plugged into the public service supply chain, to name a few. In a recent Grant Thornton survey of 179 senior local government stakeholders, 96% strongly agreed that devolution would bring economic gain, while 61% believe their devolution proposals are robust. However, not all stakeholders are equally engaged.

Further to this, an incredibly complex national picture of devolution is emerging. At the time of the conference, 11 deals were in place with a number of ‘flashpoints’ around the country. These flashpoints occur where interests are not

aligned between all the players relevant to the deal.

While these flashpoints are stalling some devolution deals, even being at the decision table was not guaranteed for all police leaders. This was one of a number of frustrations about devolution arrangements that Grant Thornton clients are expressing. Another frustration often cited in the sector was that the role of police services as shapers of place is often undervalued or not understood by other service providers. Frustrations also arose when deficiencies from existing partnerships were carried over into new devolution arrangements.

Through analysing the range of powers to be devolved in devolution deals to date, it was apparent that there was not a one-size-fits-all model that could be applied to the whole sector. There were numerous examples of devolution deals where the role of police in the devolution partnership was not clear. In discussions that did involve police there was not common agreement on some of the core governance issues, including the future role of the PCC. In Manchester, the role of the PCC has been combined with the role of the Mayor, fundamentally changing the accountability arrangement between the force and the individual wielding the powers of the PCC. No other devolution arrangement has yet

agreed this will take place. Where the directly-elected mayor does not take on the PCC function, this means a combined authority area will have two, relatively powerful, directly-elected individuals. The relationship between these individuals will be important, and will undoubtedly impact on policing in an area.

The challenges in ensuring the police are fully involved in shaping expectations via devolution upstream are further compounded by the fact there is also, taking place at the same time, a series of other 'localisation' and collaboration initiatives, some with overlapping objectives and boundaries. These include:

- Blue light collaboration between the emergency services, driven by the Home Office
- Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) between the NHS and other organisations
- Mental health collaboration, driven by the Department of Health
- Strategic alliances and shared services
- Police ICT collaboration

These initiatives do not always follow co-terminus boundaries and are often not adequately aligned to ensure that they do not suffer from duplication and 'mission

creep’. While this meant that these programmes were often not joined-up at the bottom, it was also noted that there was no clear strategic alignment at the top. Often this arose from different initiatives being championed by different Whitehall departments – STPs as a Department of Health initiative and blue light collaboration as a Home Office one for example. These programmes risk missing the bigger picture; for example STPs are focused on acute health and health and social care integration. However, they do not fully consider the wider health economy and partners, and particularly the role of police in the wider social care agenda, which may be seen as a missed opportunity.

With these issues present major challenges to successful engagement in devolution deals by the police sector, it was perhaps unsurprising that many decision makers in the police sector found great difficulty in exerting their influence on their local devolution deals. Throughout 2016, Grant Thornton held discussions with PCCs, Audit Committee members and senior police staff on the topic of devolution. Discussions with the sector suggest that: 60% think devolution could have an impact on the area they are policing and only 12% think it will not. Even more significantly, 86% think devolution could have an impact on the sector as a whole while only three

percent think the sector will be unaffected. There is general agreement that devolution initiatives will impact both local forces and the police sector as a whole. However, despite this, 65% believe the involvement of their police organisation in devolution discussions to date has been “small” – with a third thinking there has been no involvement at all. Engagement has overwhelmingly been the biggest challenge faced and health is, by far, seen as the hardest sector to engage with.

Primary concern: Shaping the future direction of primary care (Iain Murray)

An emerging hypothesis from Grant Thornton’s report ‘Primary concern: Shaping the future direction of primary care’ is that:

“The current system of primary care is unsustainable and will collapse in a few years’ time unless something fundamental changes”

If public services are to succeed in meeting the expectations of their service users then the geographical and sector boundaries that have traditionally restricted them must be overcome. One area where inspiration could be gained was in mental health – an area which is increasingly generating more demand for police services. In 2016, Grant Thornton produced ‘Partnership working in mental health: joining the dots, not picking

up the pieces'. A key finding was that investing in collaborative initiatives that focus on the needs of mental health patients were undoubtedly resulting in savings elsewhere to the public purse. Examples include:

- 92% reduction in detentions under section 136 of the Mental Health Act in Cheshire and Wirral; 50% reduction in Birmingham and Solihull; 39% in Nottinghamshire; 30% in Kent
- 647 A&E attendances avoided by one street triage team in one year in Birmingham and Solihull
- 80% remission in psychosis through early intervention in Derbyshire
- 25% of unemployed users of the café run by the Manchester Mind Young Adults Services and Projects team have gone on to find employment

In supporting emergency services looking into how they could collaborate further and what potential benefits there may be, the areas under consideration often included estates rationalisation; call handling and command and control functions; and flex and surge capacity.

There were however some recurring barriers to collaboration between the emergency services:

- Significant cultural differences between police, fire, and ambulance services
- An unclear end game; the decision to remain distinct organisations or merge?
- Blue light collaboration is one of many initiatives being undertaken; therefore there may be a danger of conflicting strategic priorities

It was noted that a key piece of the jigsaw in relation to blue light collaboration remained: the ambulance service. The benefits to increasing collaboration with the ambulance service seemed apparent. Firstly, it was noted that there are often bigger overlaps between police-ambulance and fire-ambulance than with police-fire. This is because, on a daily basis, there are hundreds of incidents where both police and ambulance (or fire and ambulance) attend. In addition, automatic referral procedures are often in place whereby ambulance staff will request police, and vice versa, based on the type of call before anyone has even attended. Closer collaboration therefore presents enormous opportunities for responding to incidents in a more effective and efficient way. The key is for partners to be dynamic and flexible enough without stifling innovation.

In summary, there are a several key requirements for successful collaboration in the emergency services:

- Understand the cultural similarities and differences
- Set tone from the top, providing leadership that champions the importance of collaborating together
- Foster a culture that puts the service user first, irrespective of traditional organisational boundaries
- Identify clear success factors and measure the partnership against them
- Identify the key individuals in the organisations who are making a difference by embracing collaboration in their day-to-day operations and use them as role models and change agents
- Involve staff at all levels to gain buy-in, ensure opportunities for future collaboration are nurtured from an early stage and provide support to overcome any barriers
- Explore how technology can improve services and reduce overlap through better sharing of information

Building on first term successes of panels for the second term potential (Tim Young)

After early teething troubles, many panels and PCCs had settled into a pattern of co-operative working relationships, holding productive discussions and securing effective outcomes from their engagement.

However, in some areas the panel-commissioner relationship had been characterised by dysfunctionality – on a PCC’s part by being deliberately unhelpful and marginalising their panel, and on a panel’s part by being adversarial and parochial instead of strategic, and lacking a clear purpose. In relatively few but nevertheless worrying cases, there had been instances of behaviour and actions falling below the standard expected: cronyism in the selection of deputy PCCs; some PCC expense scandals; examples of intemperate language by PCCs; instances of PCCs pressurising chief constables; and among a few panels, internal arguments obstructing effective panel working.

The second term had seen a 50% turnover in PCCs: six PCC offices were retained by the same political party but with a new candidate, while 14 PCC offices changed hands completely, with Conservatives gaining eight PCCs, Labour gaining four

and Plaid Cymru gaining two. In the process, nine Independent PCCs lost their positions. The net effect for panels is that 20 PCPs have found themselves working with a new PCC – hence the conference workshop allocated to this topic.

Frontline Consulting Associates and Grant Thornton wanted to capture the learning from that first term of panels and PCCs, and had surveyed them along with chief constables. The headline results from the survey are that:

- On the whole, many PCPs appear to enjoy a positive relationship with the OPCC
- 70% of PCPs regard their relationship with the OPCC as “very” or “extremely” successful
- 64% of PCPs and 63% of PCCs rate their relationship as ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ positive/constructive:
 - but 45% of PCCs think their PCP is only ‘occasionally’ or ‘rarely’ effective at supporting their work
 - and 60% of PCCs think their PCP is only ‘occasionally’ or ‘rarely’ effective at challenging their work

Panels were asked in the survey to rate how successful, difficult or time-consuming carrying out their statutory functions had been. What this revealed was that 36% of panels thought that their scrutiny of the PCC’s budget and precept had been the most successful function they had carried out – but slightly more (39%) also thought it was the most time-consuming function.

The most difficult function (at 36%) was complaints handling - it was also the second most time-consuming (at 32%) but was ranked as the second least successful function (29%). Yet for other panels complaints handling was seen as the least time-consuming function (25%), illustrating the variety of experience across England and Wales.

The exercise of the statutory function of scrutinising the PCC’s annual report showed the clearest degree of consensus: 64% of panels regarded this as the least difficult function and 57% saw it as the least time-consuming.

The survey also asked about PCPs’ proactive scrutiny work, and here we see a definite growth in the number of panels engaging in such scrutiny. A report by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Local Government Association on the panels’ first year reported that 59% of all panels were

planning to engage in proactive scrutiny work. Of respondents to our survey towards the end of the first term, 89% were undertaking proactive scrutiny.

However, not all panels think that their proactive scrutiny work is successful. While 42% of PCPs view their proactive scrutiny work as being ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ successful, 38% rate it as ‘moderately successful’ and 21% as only ‘slightly successful’. This latter percentage is matched by the percentage of those PCCs who thought that their panel’s recommendations or observations rarely influenced their decision-making or changed what they did. The PCCs who thought that their panel’s recommendations ‘always’ or ‘mostly’ influenced their decision-making or actions were very much a minority at 18%, while the bulk of PCCs (61%) chose “sometimes” to describe their panel’s influence.

The survey also asked both PCCs and panels to rank what they saw as the key barriers to panels’ effectiveness. For PCPs, ‘limited powers’ (at 93%) was clearly regarded as the biggest barrier, followed by ‘the panel’s budget’ (at 41%) and ‘the timeliness & availability of information supplied to the panel’ (at 26%). Interestingly, ‘limited powers’ ranked second in PCCs’ rating of the biggest barrier for PCPs, close behind ‘staffing support for

the panel’ (40%), with ‘political allegiances’ third on 34% – which only 22% of panels cited as a barrier.

To help encourage and enthuse both panels and PCCs, the survey collected a wealth of good practice examples from panels built up over the past four years. These were augmented in the report with examples from work with panels, PCP networks and PCCs by Frontline Consulting and Grant Thornton. The ‘Power check’ report has turned these into a checklist of suggestions for panels to consider, focusing on three aspects of panels’ operations.

The first of these is stakeholder engagement, with four indicators of good practice to check:

- Self-assessment of effectiveness over the term, using (inter alia) PCC perceptions of PCP’s challenge and support
- Enhancing the panel’s public profile through a communications strategy and a clear focus for its work
- Networking with other panels and scrutiny bodies, in order to inform panel work and enhance effectiveness
- A short skills audit, in order to check for gaps and ensure a range of skills, knowledge and experience in the panel

The second area focuses on the importance of member development to panels' effectiveness. Here the checklist identifies the following:

- Induction training: ensuring all new members receive this when joining the panel
- Regular consideration of panel training needs, making time for specific sessions (complaints handling, budget scrutiny etc) and more evaluative learning and development events
- Having champions for different issues: identifying members to focus and lead on different themes, to improve overall effectiveness and increase the panel's capacity to cover key areas in the Police and Crime Plan

The final area is work stream planning, where structured co-operation with the PCC and their office offers clear rewards. Four routes to good practice are indicated here:

- A prioritised programme of proactive scrutiny, communicated to the PCC/OPCC, stakeholders and the public, with space for new and emerging issues
- Briefings by the OPCC and PCC on their work, to inform planning and preparation for scrutiny sessions

- Co-planning with the OPCC to ensure co-operation on the work programme and timely supply of information
- A liaison officer in the OPCC: a dedicated link to engage with the panel

The proof of any survey-based report with recommendations is whether it chimes with the experience of the survey participants and offers a feasible way forward to improve practice. To date, the report has been well received. Two quotes from among the feedback by panels illustrate this:

"I thought that report was excellent. It set the scene for the national view and provided valuable lessons for [our] PCP"

"I've had a quick look at the summary of your report and it matches our experience in many respects"

It is also pleasing that a number of panels have put the report on their agenda for discussion, or have used it in learning and development sessions, or are thinking of doing so, including Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Humberside, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Thames Valley and Wiltshire. It is hoped that other panels will find it similarly useful.

Workshops

The PCC's role in the wider criminal justice system

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, Birmingham City Council and Support Officer to the West Midlands PCP

The aim of this workshop was to share experiences of incorporating scrutiny of the PCC's role in the wider criminal justice system.

Under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, there is a reciprocal duty for the PCC and certain criminal justice agencies to co-operate in ensuring an efficient and effective criminal justice system.

Those organisations are the police, the Courts and Tribunal Service, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Probation Service and prison providers. In many areas, these bodies work together through Local Criminal Justice Partnerships – though a recent inspection report questioned the effectiveness of these.

There are other partners and other areas where interests cross – for example victims' services are an area where some panels have already undertaken scrutiny work.

The experience of the West Midlands PCP

While the panel since its inception had carried out its statutory duties and regularly held the PCC to account, Members have also been keen to expand the panel's role to influence policy development on key topics. Recently, the panel completed an inquiry into FGM (female genital mutilation) which resulted in the establishment of a task group to put this agenda forward.

For the current year it has been suggested that the panel look at how well the PCC is working with partners to improve youth justice outcomes and reduce youth offending. Terms of reference for this work are currently being drafted.

The headline feedback noted that there was a tension between the local accountability of PCCs and the centralisation of functions. This places a premium on making sure that any topics chosen for contributing to policy development in this area are prioritised on the basis of what would be most effective. However, it was also noted that scrutiny of the local criminal justice system could only be undertaken through the PCC, with reports from the PCC's office, and while this could be undertaken through reactive scrutiny, there was little

enthusiasm among workshop participants for proactive scrutiny in this area.

The next step envisaged was to develop a task and finish approach to the challenge, which would need careful scoping. A reactive scrutiny approach could be pursued by asking for an annual report from the PCC on their discharge of the duty for a PCC and certain criminal justice agencies to co-operate in ensuring an efficient and effective criminal justice system, which might include, for example, a report from the local Criminal Justice Partnership.

Strategic alliances

Cllr John Adams, Chair, Dorset PCP
(morning session)

Tom Hewins, Clerk to Hertfordshire PCP
(afternoon session)

Both workshops looked at the formation of a strategic alliance by their PCC.

For Dorset PCP, the panel had been informed by the PCC three years ago that a potential Alliance (not merger) with the adjacent Police Force could help secure efficiencies in personnel and the finances of each Force, and was necessary, in the light of reduced police funding, in order to avoid losing frontline officers.

At that point the PCC encouraged Dorset PCP to form a sub-committee to oversee the formative early steps, which it did. The purpose was to establish a short lived, focused panel to draw up the correct questions and to consider the doubts that were being expressed, prior to any decision to proceed with the Alliance. The panel needed to be assured that there would be no negative impact on the police service, that any decision would be transparent and that it would deliver the substantial savings as promised.

The panel was kept abreast of the progress of the Alliance: from March to June 2014 work was carried out on its scope and feasibility; in August 2014 the design and implementation phase was undertaken; and in March 2015 the Dorset and Devon and Cornwall Strategic Alliance overarching agreement was signed, with the aim of delivering the detailed business cases by April 2017.

For Hertfordshire PCP, the strategic alliance covers three Police Forces: Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. This collaboration programme aims to deliver efficiency savings to enable a phased reduction in spending levels. The programme covers the areas of protective services (eg roads policing, major crime), operational support (public contact, criminal justice, custody and firearms licensing) and organisational support (human resources, ICT, finance, legal services, procurement, estates). Hertfordshire is also part of the Seven Force Strategic Collaboration Programme with Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Kent, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Hertfordshire PCP's role includes challenge to and scrutiny of the PCC in terms of whether the strategic alliance is delivering and contributing towards the priorities listed in the police and crime plan.

Challenges for the panel include how the panel gets to know whether the strategic alliance is actually beneficial and delivering positive outcomes. The panel's work on strategic alliances has therefore included:

- the setting up of a working group to monitor the progress of collaboration
- engagement with the PCC on the topic
- conversations with Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire PCPs.

The headline feedback from both sessions was that joint PCP working – whether of two or three panels – is essential from the beginning of the process, and that the panels need the same information about the financial and structural arrangements of the alliance to the fullest extent possible.

Of the two next steps envisaged, one is essentially practical: joint PCP working should involve establishing a joint PCP committee or working group, to oversee and monitor the business case(s) produced. But the other is asking the searching question: “how big is too big, for local accountability and transparency?” What is the maximum number of force areas and PCCs that can constitute a viable strategic alliance?

Regional collaboration

Keith Ford, Democratic Services Team Manager, Nottinghamshire County Council, supporting Nottinghamshire PCP

While the Police Act 1996 provided the legal framework for collaboration across police forces, the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 strengthened the duties on chief constables and new PCCs to keep collaboration opportunities under review and to collaborate where it is in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of their own and other Police Force areas. Under this legislation, where collaboration is judged to be the best option, they must collaborate.

Another key difference from the previous arrangements is that where collaboration would provide the best outcome for another Police Force or group of forces, then a chief officer or policing body (the PCC) should pursue it – even if they do not expect their own Force to benefit directly itself.

To develop collaboration arrangements, Home Office funding has been made available via the Police Transformation Fund.

Nottinghamshire was previously at the forefront of Force collaboration with the establishment in 2002 of the East Midlands

Special Operations Unit. This originally included Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland before the other two Forces in the region (Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire) came on board.

In 2013, the five PCCs in the East Midlands region commissioned an HMIC review of collaboration. This highlighted that progress had stalled somewhat. A clearer vision and overarching business plan was needed, along with the development of truly integrated services and appropriate infrastructure and support.

An internal audit of the East Midlands PCC board in 2016 recommended the production of a governance framework, a strategic plan, a strategic risk register and improved performance reporting on each of the areas of collaboration.

A potential five force governance structure is being developed by the chief executive of the Derbyshire OPCC to include structures, systems and processes for the development of a regional strategic plan, regional decision-making and a performance framework. The East Midlands Collaboration Programme has four portfolios led by different chief constables (with the remaining chief constable taking an overview role). Each PCC has also been

given a lead area of responsibility (not linked to their own chief constable's lead role).

There is also a tri-force collaboration programme between Nottinghamshire, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and Northamptonshire. The tri-force collaboration board recently agreed a series of business cases and reports for five work streams to enable closer working between the three forces; those three forces continue to work with the other two in the region, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire.

Nottinghamshire PCP has received regular update reports on regional collaboration and has tried both to scrutinise the PCC on this issue and to offer support to help further develop collaboration in the region. Contact has been made with the consultants involved in developing potential new regional collaboration governance arrangements with a view to building in appropriate links to the PCPs.

Discussions have continued with the other four panels in the East Midlands Regional PCP Network to look at how best to scrutinise this issue so that all five panels are confident they are 'on the same page' and to enable the feedback from each PCC to be cross-referenced. But the panels face a number of obstacles in doing so:

- **A lack of clarity and readily accessible information:** panels have struggled to cross-reference each PCC's views against the others in the region, so potentially there are five different versions of the current picture across the region
- **A lack of contacts:** there is currently no single chief constable, PCC or OPCC officer with regional overview and responsibility (although the possibility of establishing a head of regional governance role is being considered)
- **A changing landscape:** the move to emergency services collaboration, work with other local providers, the development of the tri-force collaboration, new PCCs and new chief constables

The headline feedback from the workshop raised a number of concerns and questions about regional collaboration:

- There currently is clearly a lack of public accountability of regional collaboration
- Not all panels have received updates on regional collaboration
- Devon and Cornwall and Dorset PCPs have set up a joint task and finish working group to scrutinise their strategic alliance, but Wiltshire PCP has been frustrated by the Commissioner's reluctance to work with them in agreeing a tri-PCP task group

- The potential emergence of combined authorities and elected mayors and of emergency services collaboration brings further complications and complexities, especially if they are not co-terminous with Force areas or straddle Welsh and English-speaking areas
- The value that panels might add in getting together to look at regional collaboration, in addition to taking an overview across the region and bringing a council perspective
- The added value of PCP involvement needs to be set against the drag of another potential layer of bureaucracy
- Geographical isolation and financial weakness can impact on the ability and/or willingness of a PCC to collaborate: where this is an issue for smaller forces, it is the role of the panel to seek assurance about that
- While making financial savings is a key driver for collaboration, there is a need to strike a balance between economies of scale and the commitment to community/neighbourhood policing

Next steps envisaged were:

- to ensure that the issue of regional collaboration is raised within panels that have not discussed it to date
- to keep an eye on the progress of the Devon and Cornwall and Dorset PCPs' joint task and finish group for any lessons to be disseminated widely
- to look at wider collaborative work beyond police forces.

Emergency services collaboration

Christopher Cook, Chair, Lincolnshire PCP,
Emma Baldwin, Support Officer of Lincolnshire PCP

The Government is committed to providing funding for transformation projects to encourage collaboration across the emergency services, while the new Policing and Crime Bill will also enable PCCs to take on responsibility for the fire and rescue service where a case is made locally.

In Lincolnshire, a proposal for a collaboration project aiming to improve frontline services and strengthen partnerships was put forward by Lincolnshire Police, Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue, the East Midlands Ambulance Service, the PCC and Lincolnshire County Council.

In brief it included plans for:

- Blue light tri-service operational base for police, fire and ambulance
- Joint Police and Fire HQ and a co-located control centre, with changes to the layout and infrastructure to allow staff from both organisations to operate from within the existing building, with opportunities for further future collaboration

- Review of the wider estates of each organisation, with a view to co-locating where possible to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of each organisation

The project will be funded by £7.5 million investment from the Government's Police Innovation Fund and match funding from local services. If approved, the partners are expected to deliver this collaboration programme by December 2018. Lincolnshire PCP is holding a training day with the Office of the PCC and Lincolnshire Police to receive information on the latest developments, before dedicating its next PCP meeting to the topic of collaboration, including both blue light collaboration and East Midlands Police collaboration.

The headline feedback from the workshop revealed a number of concerns:

- Co-terminosity and collaboration across services is much harder where services cross boundaries
- Some areas are merging operational roles as well as back office staff – where the former is being done, in order to gain support the PCC (not the panel) needs to engage with these staff
- PCCs are not providing information to panels until after decisions on collaboration have been taken

- There are worries that there will be ‘hostile takeovers’ of fire and rescue services by a PCC
- There may be a lack of knowledge, skills and experience of fire and ambulance services among panels, which may require the co-option of independent members with these attributes

The workshop had a number of questions affecting any next steps in this area, namely:

- Is central government’s goal a united emergency service, with PCCs becoming responsible for ambulance services in the future?
- How will devolution affect collaboration? Will it make collaboration easier or regional collaboration harder?
- Is selling off buildings for immediate savings short-sighted?
- How will fire services, which have much less external scrutiny than police forces which are subject to an HM Inspectorate, adapt and respond to additional scrutiny?
- Can ambulance services be extracted from current regionalised arrangements to become a more local service that can thereby collaborate with police and fire services?

Complaints handling

Katie Benton, Scrutiny Officer and Group Manager, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire PCP

Caroline Roser, Democratic Support Officer, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire PCP

Panels face a number of challenges in dealing with complaints against a PCC. Difficult aspects include historical complaints, unreasonable complainants and complaints which, in part, pertain to operational policing.

The ‘Power check’ survey found a pattern of mixed experiences with regard to complaints handling by panels: 32% of respondents said it was the most time-consuming of all their statutory functions, yet 25% of respondents found it the least time-consuming function.

From its inception, Hampshire Police and Crime Panel agreed that all complaints received should be considered by a complaints sub-committee, with the purpose of reviewing all complaints made against the PCC and deputy PCC in line with the panel’s ‘complaints protocol’. The sub-committee is made up of three members and is normally chaired by one of the PCP’s two independent co-opted members. It meets on an ad-hoc basis in response to

complaints activity through both online and ‘in person’ meetings, depending upon the evidence provided and the complexity of any complaint. As a working group of the panel, meetings are not usually held in public and outcomes are only published when considered to be in the public interest.

Hampshire Police and Crime Panel has very clear processes, protocols and governance arrangements for complaints (see <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/hampshire-pcp/pcc-complaints.htm>).

This has enabled it to handle complaints made to it successfully. But panels can vary in the detail of the approach that they take to complaints handling. The workshop therefore explored:

- work that panels had undertaken to refine their complaints process
- what had worked well and the lessons that had been learned along the way
- how panels had addressed the challenges posed by the difficult aspects of complaints mentioned above
- key changes that panels would like to see within the updated legislation, which would deliver the greatest value to a panel’s complaints process.

The headline feedback from panels indicated there are lots of different methods of

recording complaints and handling the informal resolution of complaints. It also revealed a number of challenges that panels faced in dealing with complaints:

- How to determine whether an outcome was in the public interest or not
- Whether to meet in public as a sub-committee as opposed to conducting business in private as a working group
- Tackling complaints about the PCCs’ use of social media
- The triaging of serious complaints, which continues to be an issue
- The under-resourcing of the IPCC for dealing with serious complaints about a PCC

Panels suggested there were several next steps to be taken:

- The Home Office needs to produce its response to the consultation undertaken on complaints to PCPs, and either enhance PCP powers or take them away
- Other improvements would be a refining of the definition of a ‘serious complaint’ and an ability to dis-apply complaints that originally related to operational policing
- Improved methods for OPCCs to provide information on complaints to panels and the ability of complainants to be in attendance at meetings would also be beneficial

Working with a new PCC

Gurvinder Sandher, Vice Chair, Kent and Medway PCP (morning session)

Sam Weston, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland PCP Support Officer (afternoon session)

The workshop explored the challenges for panels who are now working with a new PCC, given that a combination of a PCC standing down and electoral losses by incumbent PCCs had led to 20 panels finding themselves with a new PCC after the May 2016 elections. The case study in the morning workshop involved a Conservative PCC replacing an Independent, and the afternoon session a Labour PCC replacing a Conservative.

Participants in both sessions explored the following aspects:

- How the relationships with a new PCC compare to that with the previous one and whether they were for the better or worse
- Whether new PCCs understood the role of the PCP
- How new PCCs are engaging with their PCP around the updated police and crime plan
- What might help in order to develop working relations between new PCCs and their panel

Those attending the workshop had different experiences of whether their relationship had improved or worsened with the election of a new PCC. Much depended on the personality of the individual PCC as well as on the political make-up of the area.

For example, a previous PCC had a military background and an adversarial style. He regarded the panel as a threat and did not accept challenge willingly. This spilled over into his office, so that information was not shared willingly and requests for information were always challenged. Moreover he lacked understanding of partnership working and tended to operate with the perspective that the police were solely responsible for any work to be undertaken.

In contrast, the new PCC has a Parliamentary background with ministerial experience in the criminal justice field, and has welcomed the panel's input into his office's work. Before formulating his new police and crime plan he spent time building up relationships with local authority leaders to understand their concerns and the partnership context of community safety work. As a result, despite the panel chair and the PCC being from opposite ends of the political spectrum, their relationship has been extremely positive – significantly more so than with the PCC sharing the same party as the chair.

In those areas where the relationship between the new PCC and the dominant political party was very close, there was also a perception that this influenced discussion on the panel. In one example, where the panel's membership was almost completely from the same party as the PCC, there was a complete lack of challenging questions being asked at PCP meetings and a view that it had become more like a club than a 'critical friend' arrangement.

Headline feedback from the sessions focused on the following:

- There was a general perception that the new PCCs understood the limited powers of panels and used that to their advantage
- A memorandum of understanding can be a helpful fall-back option if your PCC/OPCC are hard to engage, acting as a reminder of good practice to a PCC/OPCC if they prove unwilling, for instance, to share information
- Facilitation of pre-meetings to look at agenda planning can assist in ensuring all are 'singing from the same hymn sheet' and avoiding unpleasant surprises

Next steps included the following positive suggestions:

- Panels can play a role in facilitating an exchange whereby all partners round the table can put PCCs in the picture with emerging and local issues – although this does require a positive PCC who welcomes input
- Where the ethos of a panel meeting with the PCC is more like a club, independent members may offer an example to other members of the importance of asking some decent questions
- The 'softer' activity behind the scenes enables a good relationship to develop between PCPs and PCC/OPCCs, and in this regard support officers and OPCC staff are key to success

‘Power check’

Stuart Armstrong, Grant Thornton UK LLP

Tim Young, Frontline Consulting Associates

The workshop focused on the three areas identified as a checklist for action in the ‘Power Check’ report: stakeholder engagement, member development and work stream planning.

Stakeholder engagement

Workshop participants were asked to identify:

- Which groups/individuals does your panel have a relationship with?
- How strong are those relationships and how might they be improved?
- Who might your panel build relationships with over the next year?

Panels reported different patterns of involvement with the bodies that they would be most expected to have working relationships with – local Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). Some panels had good relationships with CSPs in their area (aided by Executive portfolio holders for community safety sitting as panel members in some cases) and to a lesser extent with the OSCs, whereas for others the connections

were patchy, although efforts were being made to engage more.

Panels generally reported that their links with Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs) were much less developed – in some cases mirroring their PCCs’ lack of involvement – despite the links between crime and alcohol and drug abuse and the involvement of the police in working with people with mental health conditions. There was agreement that closer links between panels and HWBs would be useful.

There was a similar pattern in the relationships between panels and Joint Audit Committees (JACs) with some panels making use of audit committees’ reports and others having very little, if any, contact.

Some panels had also made links with their local safeguarding boards, for both children and adults.

Member development

Workshop participants were asked to reflect on:

- training that their panel currently undertakes
- areas of your work that would benefit from further training
- the current skill mix in their panels, and where the strengths and weaknesses lie.

PCPs were generally providing induction sessions for panel members (sometimes with input from the PCC/OPCC), while some were also engaging in specialised training, for example on budgets and precept setting or on other key issues such as the PCC's estates strategy. In some instances panels had also set up more reflective learning and development sessions that appraised past performance and planned strategy for the future – sometimes with an additional skills-practising element.

Private briefings for some panels from the PCC/OPCC were also valued as a way of becoming more familiar with some key issues. One panel also benefited from private briefings by the regional HMIC inspector to whom it had issued an invitation.

Skills audits had been conducted by only a few panels – their value was questioned, given that who become members of the panel is not in the gift of the panel itself. However, the idea of making it clear to nominating authorities exactly what sitting on the panel would involve was seen as positive, even though for panels with large memberships this might involve follow-up conversations with a significant number of authorities. Panels all recognised that the potential inclusion of Fire and Rescue responsibilities in some form or other in the PCCs' remit would require panels to

consider whether their existing skill sets were adequate for what would be a new and extended role.

The value of increasing the number of independent members beyond the statutory two was also recommended as a way of providing the panel with additional skills and experience.

Some panels were formally nominating individual members as 'champions' who would be specialising in and leading on particular issues, while for others there was informal recognition that particular members have expertise in an area.

Work stream planning

Panels were asked:

- What are your panel's priorities for the next year?
- What are your PCC's priorities for the next year? Do these mirror the areas you will scrutinise?
- How do you liaise with your PCC/OPCC now? How could this become more effective?

For a very few panels, their scrutiny work was wholly reactive (the finding in the 'Power Check' report was that 89% of panels responding to the survey now carry out proactive scrutiny).

A few panels reported that despite their best efforts to engage, their PCC (in office since 2012) and the PCC office still marginalised them, offering no real cooperation. A small number of panels with new PCCs also reported that they were experiencing difficulties in developing the same sort of productive relationship that they had had with the former PCC.

Next steps for panels varied considerably:

- Warwickshire, West Mercia and Dorset PCPs intended to develop a way forward using the 'Power Check' check list
- A panel that previously enjoyed a good working relationship with its PCC saw its main task now as building a relationship with its new PCC from the bottom up
- The addition of fire and rescue services to PCC responsibilities would require panels to review what they needed to do in order to tackle their own expanded remit

Conclusion

As with any conference, questions are posed and opportunities identified that can only be considered back at the workplace – the council, the panel, the meetings. Some discussions will need to be continued with other panels in strategic alliances, tri-force collaborations or regional networks. A number of conversations will need to begin with other local authorities in combined authorities or with the fire and rescue and/or ambulance services.

The agenda for PCPs is expanding, although currently the resources are not. As with all overview and scrutiny type activity, the key will be to ensure effective relationship building, proportionate work programming and prioritisation, capacity building and learning and development.

Frontline Consulting and Grant Thornton continue to be pleased to work with panels. In response to interest expressed at the conference, we will provide space for the PCPs to consider the value of forming an Association of PCPs and help to support its creation. We will offer continuing programmes of learning and development, review and strategy sessions, induction, regional networks and a conference again in 2017. Throughout this activity, we will draw on the contact that we have had with all but

three of the panels to share the good practice that PCPs continue to demonstrate. We will also seek to help PCPs respond to the changing and often demanding context in which the challenge and support for PCCs and the contribution to policing accountability is expressed.

PCP website

The dedicated PCP website (www.pcps-direct.net) and its Twitter account @PCPs direct are available in between conferences to feed in good practice ideas and experience, questions and comments. The website also carries postings of briefings from time to time, as well as examples of interesting practice that a number of panels – including Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Hampshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands – have submitted.

All panels are welcome to send in features and/or digest items. Those who register on the site are able to set up invitation-only circles or open networks on particular themes or for groups of PCPs or roles, for example, independent members.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Programme

10:00 am	<p>Welcome and opening remarks</p> <p>Chair: Vicky Wibberley, Vice-Chair and Independent Member, Derbyshire PCP</p>
10:05 am	<p>Keynote session: Learning the lessons of the past: creating a more positive future</p> <p>Professors Stephen Shute and Rod Morgan</p> <p>Table discussion to prepare questions and comments</p> <p>Q&A and comments</p>
11:15 am	<p>Break</p>
11:30 am	<p>Workshops</p> <p>The PCC's role in the wider criminal justice system Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, Birmingham City Council and Support Officer to the West Midlands PCP</p> <p>Strategic alliances Morning: Cllr John Adams, Chair, Dorset PCP Afternoon: Tom Hewins, Clerk to Hertfordshire PCP</p> <p>Regional collaboration Keith Ford, Democratic Services Team Manager, Nottinghamshire County Council, supporting Nottinghamshire PCP</p> <p>Emergency services collaboration Christopher Cook, Chair, Lincolnshire PCP and Emma Baldwin, Support Officer, Lincolnshire PCP</p> <p>Complaints handling Katie Benton, Scrutiny Officer and Group Manager, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire PCP. Caroline Roser, Democratic Support Officer, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire PCP</p> <p>Working with a new PCC Morning: Gurvinder Sandher, Vice Chair, Kent and Medway PCP Afternoon: Sam Weston, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland PCP Support Officer</p>

'Power Check'. Insights for the second term from Frontline Consulting and Grant Thornton's survey of PCPs, PCCs and chief constables

Stuart Armstrong, Grant Thornton
Tim Young, Frontline Consulting

12:30pm

Lunch and networking

1:15pm

Plenary

Chair: Ann Reeder, Director, Frontline Consulting Associates

Keynote session: Policing accountability and expectations: devolution, collaboration and some insights from 'Power check'

Paul Grady and Iain Murray, Grant Thornton, on wider sector considerations, which are relevant for the second term, and some findings from the survey

Tim Young, Frontline Consulting, on potential follow up in PCPs' second term, building on first term successes of panels

Table discussion to prepare questions and comments, including action ideas, based on survey findings and the checklist

Q&A and comments

2:15pm

Break

2:30pm

Workshops repeated

3:30pm

Closing plenary

Headline feedback from workshops and discussion of next steps, including the potential for setting up an Association of Police and Crime Panels, as suggested by some panel chairs

4:00pm

Close and evaluation

Appendix 2: List of participants

Name	Position	Panel
Richard Brown	Vice-Chair	Avon and Somerset PCP
Andy Sharman	Independent Member	Avon and Somerset PCP
Patricia Jones	Clerk to Panel	Avon and Somerset PCP
Cllr Fiona Chapman	Chair	Bedfordshire PCP
Paul Cain	Vice-Chair – Independent Member	Bedfordshire PCP
Cllr Peter Hollick	Panel Member	Bedfordshire PCP
Cllr Raja Saleem	Panel Member	Bedfordshire PCP
Damian Warburton	Independent Member	Bedfordshire PCP
Keith Simmons	Head of Registration and Records	Bedfordshire PCP
Cllr Dave Baigent	Panel Member	Cambridgeshire PCP
Cllr Ray Bisby	Panel Member	Cambridgeshire PCP
Jane Webb	Senior Democratic Services Officer	Cambridgeshire PCP
Bob Fousert	Independent Member	Cheshire PCP
Eric Hodgson	Independent Member	Cheshire PCP
Cllr Celia Tibble	Chair	Cumbria PCP
Cllr Judith Cooke	Panel Member	Cumbria PCP
Cllr Neil Hughes	Panel Member	Cumbria PCP
Mark Clement	Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor	Cumbria PCP
Vicky Wibberley	Vice-Chair – Independent Member	Derbyshire PCP
Cllr Richard Bright	Panel Member	Derbyshire PCP

Cllr Godfrey Claff	Panel Member	Derbyshire PCP
Cllr John Frudd	Panel Member	Derbyshire PCP
Cllr Jane Orton	Panel Member	Derbyshire PCP
David Rose	Improvement and Scrutiny Officer	Derbyshire PCP
Cllr Roger Croad	Chair	Devon & Cornwall PCP
Yvonne Atkinson	Independent Member	Devon & Cornwall PCP
Joanne Heather	Democratic and Governance Officer	Devon & Cornwall PCP
Ross Jago	Performance & Research Officer	Devon & Cornwall PCP
Cllr John Adams	Chair	Dorset PCP
Robert Edgecombe	Legal Services Manager	Dyfed Powys PCP
Cllr Roger Wilson	Chair	Gloucestershire PCP
Cllr Rob Garnham	Panel Member	Gloucestershire PCP
Cllr Keith Pearson	Panel Member	Gloucestershire PCP
Stephen Bace	Senior Democratic Services Adviser	Gloucestershire PCP
Katie Benton	Scrutiny Officer and Group Manager	Hampshire PCP
Caroline Roser	Democratic Support Officer	Hampshire PCP
Cllr Martin Brooks	Panel Member	Hertfordshire PCP
Cllr Rabi Martins	Panel Member	Hertfordshire PCP
Dr Malcolm Ramsay	Independent Member	Hertfordshire PCP
Tom Hewins	Clerk to Panel	Hertfordshire PCP
Gurvinder Sandher	Vice-Chair – Independent Member	Kent & Medway PCP

Phil Llewellyn	Councillor Support Manager	Lancashire PCP
Cllr Ratilal Govind	Panel Member – Leicester	Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland PCP
Sam Weston	Support Officer – Leicester	Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland PCP
Christopher Cook	Chair – Independent Member	Lincolnshire PCP
Emma Baldwin	Police and Crime Panel Officer	Lincolnshire PCP
Councillor Simon Shaw	Vice-Chairperson of the Panel	Merseyside PCP
Keith Glover	PCP Support Officer	Merseyside PCP
Cllr Brian Hannah	Panel Member	Norfolk PCP
Cllr Dr Christopher Kemp	Panel Member	Norfolk PCP
Cllr Julie Fallon	Chair	North Wales PCP
Pat Astbury	Vice-Chair – Independent Co-opted Member	North Wales PCP
Richard Jarvis	Lead Officer for the North Wales PCP	North Wales PCP
Cllr Peter Wilkinson	Vice-Chair	North Yorkshire PCP
Santokh Singh Sidhu	Community Co-opted Member	North Yorkshire PCP
Paula Stott	Community Co-opted Member	North Yorkshire PCP
Diane Parsons	Panel Secretariat	North Yorkshire PCP
Anita Shields	Independent Member	Northamptonshire PCP
Cllr Debbie Mason	Vice-Chair	Nottinghamshire PCP
Keith Ford	Team Manager, Democratic Services	Nottinghamshire PCP
Cllr Stuart Sansome	Vice-Chair	South Yorkshire PCP
Cllr Jackie Drayton	Panel Member	South Yorkshire PCP
James McLaughlin	Democratic Services Manager	South Yorkshire PCP

Cllr Bernard Peters	Panel Member	Staffordshire PCP
Huma Younis	Scrutiny Officer	Surrey PCP
Cllr Bill Bentley	Vice-Chair	Sussex PCP
Cllr Trevor Egleton	Chair	Thames Valley PCP
Cllr Barrie Patman	Panel Member	Thames Valley PCP
Clare Gray	PCP Scrutiny Officer	Thames Valley PCP
Robin Verso	Chair – Independent Member	Warwickshire PCP
Cllr Nicola Davies	Panel Member	Warwickshire PCP
Cllr Moira Ann Grainger	Panel Member	Warwickshire PCP
Cllr Peter Morson	Panel Member	Warwickshire PCP
Cllr David Reilly	Panel Member	Warwickshire PCP
Stefan Robinson	Senior Democratic Services Officer	Warwickshire PCP
Cllr Brian Wilcox	Chair	West Mercia PCP
Cllr Tony Miller	Vice-Chair	West Mercia PCP
Cllr Sebastian Bowen	Panel Member	West Mercia PCP
Cllr Phil Grove	Panel Member	West Mercia PCP
Cllr Stephen Reynolds	Panel Member	West Mercia PCP
Helen Barker	Independent Member	West Mercia PCP
Tim Rice	Health and Wellbeing Manager	West Mercia PCP
Cllr Cathryn Bayton	Panel Member	West Midlands PCP
Cllr Peter Douglas-Osborn	Panel Member	West Midlands PCP
Cllr Jayne Francis	Panel Member	West Midlands PCP
Cllr Ken Hawkins	Panel Member	West Midlands PCP
Cllr Fiona Williams	Panel Member	West Midlands PCP

Emma Williamson	Head of Scrutiny	West Midlands PCP
Cllr Alan Wassell	Vice-Chair	West Yorkshire PCP
Cllr Josie Jarosz	Panel Member	West Yorkshire PCP
Samantha Wilkinson	Police & Crime Panel Officer	West Yorkshire PCP
Cllr Richard Britton	Chair	Wiltshire PCP
Cllr Junab Ali	Panel Member	Wiltshire PCP

Speakers		
Professor Stephen Shute	Speaker	University of Sussex
Professor Rod Morgan	Speaker	University of Bristol

Sponsors

Paul Grady	Head of Police	Grant Thornton UK LLP
Iain Murray	Deputy Head of Police	Grant Thornton UK LLP
Stuart Armstrong	Police Board Member	Grant Thornton UK LLP

Conference organisers

Ann Reeder	Director	Frontline Consulting
Tim Young	Senior Associate	Frontline Consulting
Dave Burn	Associate	Frontline Consulting
Tim Daniel	Conference Assistant	Frontline Consulting

About us

About Frontline Consulting Associates

Public sector reform and devolution are transforming the roles of and opportunities for elected members on local authorities. Frontline Consulting understands this changing context and the challenges it presents for councillors.

With long-standing experience across the publicly funded sector, our team provides consultancy and learning and development for local authorities, PCPs and their partners. We emphasise the need to involve councillors fully in developing governance, strategies and services, and to consult widely with service users and residents.

Since the introduction of new policing accountabilities, Frontline Consulting has worked with PCPs as they set up their governance and procedures. We have delivered induction programmes, undertaken reviews of PCP activity, sourced good practice, conducted a review of the first terms of PCCs and panels, and facilitated learning and development workshops. We support regional networks of PCPs and organise the annual conference for PCPs.

Frontline Consulting will be supporting the possible formation of an Association of Police and Crime Panels to build on this work and to give PCPs in England and Wales a voice to the Association of PCCs and to Government.

Our tailor-made consultancy and interactive learning and development activity will continue to help panels fulfil their statutory duties and develop proactive scrutiny in response to the changing landscape of policing accountability, the wider criminal justice system and the public sector.

About Grant Thornton UK LLP

At Grant Thornton, our underlying purpose is to build a vibrant economy. A core part in achieving this will be creating places where people and businesses can flourish. We want to play our part in creating a healthy and equitable society by helping those responsible for public services to make better-informed, longer-term decisions; decisions that drive reform and deliver economic growth and social value.

We have a well-established market in the public sector and, as the largest external auditor of local authorities, fire and police bodies in England and Wales, we have the requisite technical and operational expertise, relationships and sector specialisms required to deliver innovative solutions and market insights. Our services to the police sector include value-added assurance, internal audit services, advice on governance and the development of major change diagnostics.

Our approach draws on a deep knowledge of the police sector combined with an understanding of wider public sector issues. We take an active role in influencing and interpreting policy developments affecting the police and in responding to government consultation documents and their agencies.

We regularly produce sector-related insight reports including 'Police reform: a developing picture' and 'The future of policing accountability: Learning the lessons' and a number of sector briefings on PCC transparency, police accounting, governance and audit committee effectiveness. We also speak at national events and run seminars to share our thinking and, more importantly, understand the challenges and issues facing our clients.

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The screenshot shows the top section of the PCPs-Direct.net website. At the top is a dark teal navigation bar with links for HOME, DIGEST, HELP, and CONTACT US. Below this is a large banner area. On the left side of the banner is an aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood. Overlaid on the bottom left of this photo is a dark box with the text 'PCPs Direct' and 'What this site is all about', with a red 'READ MORE' button below it. On the right side of the banner is a vertical stack of four buttons: 'Register' (with subtext 'It's free to join' and 'Register here'), 'PCPs Direct' (in a red box), 'Exchange', 'Information', and 'Latest Feature'. At the bottom of the page are three dark teal buttons labeled 'DIGEST', 'NETWORKS', and 'PCPS-DIRECT.NET'.

This report captures the speeches, discussions, workshops and findings of the fifth national conference for Police and Crime Panels, organised by Frontline Consulting Associates. It was sponsored by Grant Thornton UK LLP and hosted by West Midlands PCP at Birmingham City Council's offices.

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GRT105358
ISBN 978-0-9930602-4-3