

## **PCC REVIEW: CONTRIBUTION**

The Home Office review has five fields/topics:

1. Accountability/legitimacy
2. Resilience
3. Scrutiny mechanisms
4. Relationship between PCC and Chief Constable
5. Mayoral PCC role.

Of these 5 topics, it would be difficult, arguably, for us to tackle the second (resilience) and fifth topics – except to note that, for resilience, the need for a ‘PCC in waiting’ has not been tested or exposed here, over nearly a ten-year period. Any possible mayoral dimension (topic 5) is probably beyond our current experience.

### **TOPIC 4: Relationship between PCC and Chief Constable**

As to the fourth topic, the relationship between PCC and Chief Constable can be briefly reviewed here, on the basis of at least some exposure. We have welcomed those occasions when PCC and Chief Constable have made a joint appearance at meetings of the Police and Crime Panel, either in its formal/public sessions or, more rarely, at occasional training events for the Panel (the last of which, sadly, was cancelled, a couple of years ago). We are aware of apparently good personal relationships between the PCC and the Chief Constable(s) over the last decade (the same PCC throughout, but two Chief Constables have been in post). We are aware that the PCC is able to bring to bear his experience of the previous, less adequate arrangements before 2011, and was ‘cautious’ with his first Chief Constable, with whom he would have had a prior working relationship. With his second, still relatively new Chief Constable, he has been dealing with someone whom he very largely identified or selected for the role (though his decision needed of course to be ratified by the Police and Crime Panel, which does seem a useful ‘secondary interview’ process). It is worth noting that a Commissioner’s choice of candidate, from the perennially limited pool of relevant senior police candidates, does not offer much room for manoeuvre, or for promoting diversity. Only a tiny handful of senior officers felt able to apply for the job of Chief Constable for Hertfordshire when the post needed to be advertised/filled, around 3 years ago; and, in effect, there was only one ‘serious’ candidate. Fortunately, this person has been doing well, but the underlying issue of the very limited field of candidates for this senior public-sector role remains a serious one, which should ideally be addressed by the Home Office as part of its review of the role of PCCs. With PCCs now well established, it should be possible for the Home Office to look to encourage a wider field of Chief Constable candidates, more actively.

### **TOPICS 1 AND 3: Accountability and scrutiny mechanisms**

There is a fundamental issue here, which is the lack of yardsticks whereby the performance of both the police and the PCC can be appraised or even understood, at the level of the individual police force area. At the national level, there are two yardsticks for appraising changes in the level and nature of crime: reported crime and the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW). Each yardstick has its strengths and weaknesses. For recorded crime in recent years, one ‘weakness’ as a source of

measurement is the strengthening of efforts to enhance recording of crimes, as promoted in recent years by the Inspectorate. Another is the wholesale avoidance of cyber-crime. Both of these issues can partly be redressed by drawing on CSEW findings. Crime surveys don't come cheap, and the CSEW only offers national coverage. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has however shown intermittent interest in the possibility of promoting force-level datasets using multiple years' worth of data, and this and other options should be explored further as part of this review.

Can it really be right for the Annual Report of a Police and Crime Commissioner to exist in largely a measurement vacuum? How can anyone even begin to judge how well the policing of Hertfordshire has been carried out over the last decade under the combined oversight of PCC and Chief Constable? The latest Annual Report of the Commissioner for Hertfordshire has, right at the very beginning (the only place where key performance data is addressed), a sequence of conflicting statements which highlight the measurement vacuum. First there is a ringing claim: "Last year showed a very positive picture for the performance of Hertfordshire Constabulary with crime down by 1.8% and a criminal justice outcome rate of 13.4%." (At the very least, there is a missing word here: the reference should be to 'recorded crime', not just 'crime'.)

Less than a dozen lines later, another paragraph opens: "Under-reported crime means that victims are not getting justice and perpetrators are free to harm others." What is the ordinary reader to make of these apparently contradictory statements so close together, right at the beginning of the Foreword? How has crime really been changing in Hertfordshire, in recent years?

Tackling the measurement vacuum is not going to be easy, but this is an issue where the Home Office needs to foster some fresh thought, in partnership with ONS and as wide a set of other organisations as possible. Without better management information about crime patterns, how can PCC or Chief Constable do their job with full effectiveness, or be held to account by their public?



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