



A policy statement on decision making by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley

Introduction

The statutory framework for decision making by police and crime commissioners consists of:

- Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 – creates the PCC as a corporation sole, assigning functions, giving a general power of competence and requiring that their decisions and actions be reviewed and scrutinised by a police and crime panel. It also enables the Local Government Ombudsman to investigate any allegations or apparent maladministration by police and crime commissioners,
- The Policing Protocol Order 2011 highlights that the police and crime commissioner will be responsible for the totality of policing and that their conduct must abide by the seven Nolan principles of good governance in public life,
- The Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) Order 2011 and The Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information)(Amendment) Order 2012 set out the information which must be published relating to decision making,
- The Financial Management Code of Practice for the police service provides clarity around financial governance arrangements,
- Various general social and organisational legislation e.g. Human Rights Act 1998, employment law.

The quality of a decision is usually judged on its outcome after the event. However, a good decision making process is likely to produce more consistent, reliable and objectively sustainable decisions than a poor disorganised one. This policy and associated guidance seeks to set the right framework to facilitate good decisions, which will inevitably range from simple to those of significant public interest.

Principles

The APACE guidance and practice on decision making advice provides detailed reference material. However, the overarching principles for decision making to be adopted by the police and crime commissioner for Thames Valley are that all decisions will be in accordance with the:

- powers and duties established within the statutory framework,
- good governance principles¹,

¹ The Good Governance Standard for Public Services, 2005

- Nolan principles²,
- good administrative practice³.

Decision making process

Through adopting the above principles the police and crime commissioner for Thames Valley will ensure that the right climate is set for decision making. These principles are all of critical importance, but require the consistent application of good process. Although some of the decisions to be taken by the police and crime commissioner for Thames Valley will be of significant public interest, complex and costly, the basic process to be followed prior to each decision will be:

- all relevant material, information and facts will be assembled,
- consultation with all interested and affected parties,
- consideration of all available courses of action,
- specialist / significant advice sought,
- information presented which focuses on the core issues, and is consistent with the police and crime commissioner's aims and objectives.

The scale of each of the above elements will depend upon a number of factors such as the level of public interest, the risk, impact, complexity and cost.

A plan of forthcoming decisions will be maintained by the chief executive and made available to local people and this plan will be aligned to the information held in Thames Valley Police integrated business management process.

Recording, transparency and publication

The above policy principles require good record keeping, not only of the decisions taken by the police and crime commissioner for Thames Valley, but also the accompanying information and challenge, which supports each decision.

Therefore the Chief Executive will ensure that a record of each decision is made and all associated information retained in accordance with the record management policy.

In addition the Chief Executive will ensure that once decisions are taken by the police and crime commissioner, they are effectively communicated both internally and externally and, in particular, to ensure that any implementation and accountability arrangements are initiated.

The statutory requirements for transparency⁴ set out the minimum standards for access, publication and availability of information. However, on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, the Chief Executive will ensure that all information used in coming to a decision will be made accessible to local people through a variety of means. The means will be determined by where the decision lies on the sliding scale of public interest including:

² Standards in Public Life: First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, 2004

³ Commission for Local Administration, Good Administration Practice, 2001

⁴ Elected local Policing Body (Specified Information) Order 2011, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 1998

- Office of Police and Crime Commissioner web site – decision records and associated papers,
- Media releases,
- Leaflets,
- Social media e.g. twitter, blogs,
- Web casts,
- Annual reports.

Statutory Officers

The Chief Executive (monitoring officer) and / or Chief Finance Officer are part of the legal framework to report contraventions of the law or maladministration. They have statutory responsibility for identifying contraventions and any deviation from the core principles of good governance and to report anything which gives rise to concern over a proposal, decision or omission.

These roles will therefore provide the gatekeeper for ensuring this policy and its principles are implemented.

