

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**22 JULY 2015**

**Title:** Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire - Safer Neighbourhood Panels

**Submitted by:** Sarah Moore – Partnerships Manager

**Portfolios:** Policy, People and Partnerships  
Safer Communities

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Purpose of the Report**

Safer Neighbourhood Panels (SNPs) have been established in each District by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) in Staffordshire, following the success of the Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel, which tests the accuracy of crime recording, examines the response of police to incidents and analyses the way they handle complaints about policing. The Panels will ensure policing in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent is open and transparent, giving local people the chance to influence how their area is policed. The role of the panel is to:-

- Ensure residents are better informed and involved.
- Scrutinise all elements of local policing to ensure both the OPCC and Police priorities are delivered.
- Provide regular feedback to local policing teams and other community safety forums.
- Collaborate with other functions to ensure that engagement and scrutiny work with Staffordshire Police is joined up.
- Utilise and provide information that will aid greater transparency and openness.
- Assist in the building of further community engagement opportunities.
- Contribute to the wellbeing of the local area.

This report seeks Cabinet nominations for two Elected Members to represent the Borough Council on the SNP for Newcastle-under-Lyme.

**Recommendations**

The report recommends that Cabinet supports the SNP process and makes nominations to OPCC for two Elected Members to represent the Borough Council on the SNPs.

**Reasons**

The recommendations are made to ensure that the Borough Council is fully represented in the SNPs process and continues to support the work of OPCC.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 OPCC envisages that SNPs will build on the work of the Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel, whose role is to scrutinise elements of what Staffordshire Police does and help them to resolve issues and move forward in a positive way.
- 1.2 OPCC has recognised the value of this work and so would like to see engagement and involvement at a more local level; seeing further scrutiny, openness and transparency in policing. There will be eleven SNPs (eight in the county and three within the city), delivered in three phases and they aim to enable people to influence, improve the way their local area is policed.
- 1.3 Phase one of the process began earlier this year and is now well established in Cannock Chase, Staffordshire Moorlands and South Staffordshire. The Local Authorities selected for the second phase are Newcastle, Stafford, Lichfield and one locality/LPT area in Stoke (north, central or south – to be confirmed).
- 1.4 The Borough Council has been approached by OPCC to lead the co-ordination of SNPs and has been awarded £10,000 per annum in order to support the delivery of the function. OPCC has initiated a delivery timetable for the second phase and the recruitment stage for SNP members will begin week commencing the 29<sup>th</sup> June and close on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2015. Interviews will take place week commencing 27<sup>th</sup> July 2015. First meetings will be held during September 2015.

## **2. Safer Neighbourhood Panels (SNPs)**

- 2.1 The overarching aim of the SNPs is to hold the local policing commander to account to ensure that local policing is being delivered effectively. The SNPs also seek to identify improvement opportunities or areas of challenge that may require research. Task and finish groups may be established to do this. This will be achieved by providing local scrutiny of issues considered by the Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel and also examination of crime figures, use of restorative justice and complaint resolution. The SNP will not discuss specific incidents and/or crimes (although specific ones may be selected as part of the scrutiny process). They will continue to be dealt with through the proper channels e.g. 101, 999 etc.
- 2.2 The SNP will be made up of between 12 and 15 members from a mix of backgrounds. Membership will be reviewed annually. This should comprise of:
  - No more than a third will be Councillors (ideally, one county and two district/borough)
  - One Neighbourhood Watch
  - One Magistrate
  - Local residents (ideally, around two thirds)
  - Business community representatives
- 2.3 The Magistrate will be selected by the Bench Chairman for the area, the County, District or Borough Councillor will be selected by the Leader of the Council or through the Council's decision making process. Business representatives will either be approached direct or via the Chambers of Commerce (it is proposed that Newcastle will approach the Town Centre Partnership for a nomination). All Panel members will be residents of the area. Other members will be invited to apply during the panel recruitment stage. Prospective members will be asked to complete an application form and should be residents of the area. Those local residents who are shortlisted will be asked to attend an interview demonstrating that they have the necessary skills, experience and interest in what matters in their community. Once selected they will be subject to a vetting process by Staffordshire Police.

- 2.4 Membership of the Panel will be for an initial 6 months, which will be followed by a review by the OPCC and the panel chair. If all parties agree, membership will be extended for a further 6 months and will subsequently be reviewed annually. Membership will be limited to a maximum of 3 years from the date of original appointment. This is to ensure a degree of continuity of skills and experience, whilst also having in place a process to refresh the membership.
- 2.5 SNP meetings will be held quarterly at a time and venue to be determined by the Panel. Initially, meetings will not be open to the public however, it is expected that once the SNP is well established members of the public will be able to attend.
- 2.6 The SNP are not restricted to a discrete list of areas to scrutinise as there is an expectation that as members develop their experience, this will lead to identifying new areas to discuss. Suggested agenda items include (but are not limited to):
- Overview presentation by LPT Commander of key issues
  - Discussion of presentation
  - Scrutiny of restorative justice
  - Issues/concerns of locality wide issues
  - Issues raised by the Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel
- 2.7 The SNP will remain under the control of the OPCC and will not form part of the Council's governance. The Council will support its delivery, with the Panel operating independently.

### **3. Proposal and Reason for Preferred Solution**

- 3.1 This report seeks Cabinet nominations for two Elected Members to represent the Borough Council on the SNP for Newcastle-under-Lyme, in order to continue to support the work of OPCC.

### **4. Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The recommendations above contribute to the following Council's Corporate Priorities namely; a Cleaner, Safer and Sustainable Borough and Delivering a Co-operative Council.

### **5. Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific legal or statutory implications for consideration within this report.

### **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 There are no adverse equality issues identified as arising from this report.

### **7. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 There are resource implications for Borough Council Officers and Members as part of their substantive duties who will continue to provide support to delivering SNPs in the Borough in relation to these recommendations. These implications include officer time predominantly from the Partnerships Team.
- 7.2 The Police and Crime Commissioner will provide each District with £10,000 per annum, for three years to support the SNP delivery. This will enable the local authority to pay for the administration and facilitation of the SNPs. This will include the development of the work plan, taking and publishing minutes and reports, venue hire and organising training for members.

7.3 It is proposed that this funding should be used to facilitate a full time Partnerships Apprentice (in line with the Council's Apprentice scheme) so that capacity can be moved around in the existing Partnerships Team to co-ordinate and deliver this additional activity, under the supervision of the Partnerships Manager.

7.4 There are no additional specific financial implications or commitments required for the implementation of these recommendations to the Borough Council.

## **8. Major Risks**

8.1 In the event of an adverse decision the Council may be unable to support delivery of the SNPs and this may be detrimental to the current partnership and working arrangements with OPCC.

## **9. Key Decision Information**

9.1 This report can be considered key in the following ways: -

- It results in the Borough Council committing existing resources for the function to which the decision relates and;
- It is significant because it affects more than two or more electoral wards in the Borough.

## **10. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

10.1 None

## **11. List of Appendices**

11.1 None

## **12. Background Papers**

12.1 None