**Friday October 19th, 2012**

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**AWYA**

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**Item 3**

**Old Court Room, Wakefield Town Hall**

**Draft Communications Plan**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Panel’s comments on a draft Communications Plan for 2012/13.

**2. Background**

2.1 At the last meeting on September 7th, the Panel was asked to consider its approach to communications and engagement, including the extent to which it wanted to raise its public profile both before and after the elections on November 15th.

2.2 The Panel agreed that public awareness of the Panel’s existence and of its role and responsibilities was important but that this must only be pursued in the context of the limited budget available to the Panel.

2.3 For this reason, the AWYA was asked to utilise free press and marketing opportunities wherever possible and to use the Panel’s website as the main method of communication.

2.4 It was also agreed that the AWYA should make maximum use of the results and learning gathered through the consultation exercises/ public engagement activities carried out by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

2.5 A draft communications plan has now been developed on this basis and can be found below.

**3. Draft Communications Plan**

3.1 **Introduction**

3.1.1 In November 2012, a West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner will be elected by the public and given responsibility for the way in which policing is delivered in West Yorkshire. This includes setting policing priorities through a Police and Crime Plan and then spending the police budget in a way that addresses these priorities.

3.1.2 The West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel will be working on behalf of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield to try and ensure that the Police and Crime Commissioner meets the needs of all the communities that he/ she has been elected to serve.

3.1.3 Police and Crime Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels are part of a completely new National Government Policy which is aiming to strengthen the link between policing and the public.

3.1.4 The Panel is made up of 12 elected members from the five West Yorkshire authorities and 2 independent members. Panel members will work in close partnership, with each other and with other key agencies, to guarantee the best possible policing and crime outcomes for the whole of West Yorkshire.

3.1.5 Once the Commissioner has been appointed, the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel will be responsible for:

* Reviewing and making recommendations on the amount of Council Tax the Commissioner intends to collect from each household to support policing. The Panel can demand that the proposed amount is made higher or lower but the Commissioner only needs to meet this demand once.
* Reviewing the Commissioner’s proposal about who should be Chief Constable and therefore in charge of the operational running of the police force. The panel has the power to turn down the preferred candidate but again they can do this only once.
* Reviewing and making recommendations on the Commissioner’s five year Police and Crime Plan.
* Reviewing the Commissioner’s Annual Report which will outline his/ her performance against the Police and Crime Plan.
* Confirming the appointment of senior staff who will be working for the Commissioner
* Dealing with non-criminal complaints made against the Commissioner

3.2 **Aims**

3.2.1 To raise public awareness of the existence and of the roles and responsibilities of the Police and Crime Panel within existing resource constraints.

3.2.2 To provide timely and accurate information to the public about the Panel through the Panel website and liaison with the media.

3.2.3 To provide a responsive service to the media when issues of public interest emerge.

3.2.4 To work responsibly with the media when both resolvable and irreconcilable differences between the Panel and the Police and Crime Commissioner occur.

3.3 **Audiences**

3.3.1 The primary audiences for communications relating to the Police and Crime Panel will be the media (local and regional) and residents of West Yorkshire. It is these audiences that are the focus of this plan.

3.3.2 Engagement with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is addressed through a distinct ‘Partnership Agreement.’

3.32 Communications and engagement with other key partners is addressed through a series of other documents entitled ‘Principles for Engagement’.

3.4 **Strategy**

**Website**

3.4.1 The Panel’s primary method of communication with the public will be via the Panel’s dedicated website ([www.westyorkshire-pcp.gov.uk](http://www.westyorkshire-pcp.gov.uk)).

Its main functions will be to:

* Provide an overview of the role and responsibilities of the Panel
* Provide a brief profile on each of the Panel members
* Publish Panel meeting dates, locations, agendas, papers and minutes
* Publish any recommendations or reports made by the Panel (see 3.4.17)
* Enable members of the public to make comments and suggestions to the Panel
* Enable members of the public to submit complaints against the Commissioner and inform them of the full complaints process.

3.4.2 The content of the website will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is both accurate and relevant. However, the amount of information put on the website will be contained to avoid the content becoming un-manageable or outdated.

3.4.3 Links to the Panel’s website will be placed on the websites of:

* The five West Yorkshire Local Authorities
* The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
* West Yorkshire Police
* West Yorkshire Criminal Justice Agencies

**Complaints**

3.4.4 A specific leaflet will be produced to explain to the public the process for submitting, dealing with and resolving complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner.

3.4.5 This leaflet will be available in an electronic format on those websites listed in section 3.4.3.

3.4.6 A number of hard copies will also be disseminated to the Corporate Communications Team in each West Yorkshire Authority to distribute appropriately. For example, placing them in the main Council buildings and arranging their circulation at neighbourhood forums/ PACT meetings.

3.4.7 The Panel’s Complaints procedure will not be advertised in official police buildings to avoid confusion about the direction of complaints relating to operational policing matters.

**Press**

3.4.8 Prior to the elections on November 15th, the AWYA will only respond to those press enquiries that relate to facts about the make-up of the Panel and its role and responsibilities.

3.4.9 A press release that covers this information will be circulated to local and regional newspapers at the beginning of November to coincide with the increased election coverage. (A draft of this press release will be circulated electronically for the Panel’s consideration.)

3.4.10 Following the elections in November, any factual press enquiries will be dealt with by the AWYA. Where the Panel is asked to provide a quote or opinion on any issue, this will first be considered by the Chair and if deemed necessary, referred to the full Panel for comment.

3.4.11 The Panel and its members will avoid making any comments to the press which could unfairly discredit partners and/ or damage the Panel’s own credibility, especially in cases where the issue in question does not directly relate to the Panel’s remit.

3.4.12 Should an individual Panel Member wish to make a comment to the press about a particular issue without consultation with other Panel Members, the Member must emphasise that they are not speaking on behalf of the Panel but in their capacity as an elected member.

3.4.13 The Panel may choose to circulate statements to the press at key points in its annual cycle to advertise its involvement/ achievements in policing in West Yorkshire. For example, following; agreement about the precept, the publication of the Police and Crime Plan, the publication of subsequent Annual Reports, the appointment of a new Chief Constable.

3.4.14 If the Police and Crime Commissioner works alongside the Panel in a positive and constructive manner when exercising the responsibilities listed above, the Panel will ensure that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is offered the opportunity to comment on any press releases relating to these responsibilities.

3.4.15 The Panel will have overall discretion over the extent to which it involves and consults the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner when preparing and releasing statements to the press.

3.4.16 Where irreconcilable differences occur between the Panel and the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Panel will inevitably need to utilise the media to ensure the public is informed about the efforts it has made to advocate the interests of communities in West Yorkshire.

**Publication of Panel Decisions**

3.4.17 The Panel is obliged to publish any reports or recommendations made to the Police and Crime Commissioner in relation to:

* The Police and Crime Plan
* Commissioner’s Annual Reports
* Appointment of a Chief Constable
* The level of the precept

3.4.18 It is for the Panel to determine the manner in which these reports and recommendations are published. In the majority of cases these reports will be only made available on the Panel website. However, where the Commissioner has not accepted the Panel’s recommendations the Panel is more likely to issue a press release on the matter.

**Public Consultation**

3.4.19 In carrying out its role, the Panel has a duty to check that the Commissioner has consulted appropriately with victims and the public. Due to resource constraints it will not be feasible for the Panel to corroborate the Commissioner’s approach to this by embarking on its own programme of public consultation.

3.4.20 Instead, the Panel will need to gauge the extent to which the Commissioner has consulted with victims and the public by:

* Seeking information on the Commissioner’s consultation and engagement activities directly from the Office of the Police and Commissioner
* Engaging in regular dialogue with the Local Criminal Justice Board, particularly the ‘Victim and Witnesses’ sub-group.
* Taking into account the perspectives offered by elected members, for example, via the briefings provided by the Local Crime and Disorder Committees.

3.5 **Timescales**

3.5.1 The timescales for Panel communications will very much reflect its annual timetable, in terms of final precept/ Police and Crime Plan discussions and so forth.

3.5.2 Clearly, there will be an element of responsiveness depending on the activities of the Commissioner and on the occurrence of any high profile policing issues which may require Panel input or comment.

3.6 **Resources**

3.6.1 It is difficult to anticipate the level of media interest in the Police and Crime Panel until the Police and Crime Commissioner begins to carry out the new role from November onwards.

3.6.2 The AWYA will lead on communications relating to the Panel with support from the Corporate Communications Team at Wakefield MDC.

3.6.3 Approximately £5,000 has been identified in the Panel’s budget to support Communications related activity, including the development of the website.

**4. Recommendations**

4.1 The Panel is asked to comment on the draft Communications Plan as outlined in this report