

# **Communications Protocol**

**between**

**The Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and  
Crime Commissioner**

**&**

**Nottinghamshire Police**

**Date of Agreement: 13 November 2012**

**Date of Review: 13 April 2013**

## **Communications Protocol**

This document constitutes a protocol between the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner and Nottinghamshire Police regarding communications activity undertaken by both organisations. It contains the following sections:

1. Context
2. Principles
3. Purpose
4. Scope
5. Aims
6. Operation
7. Activities and Responsibilities
8. Review
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### **1. Context**

The Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner (Commissioner) and Nottinghamshire Police recognise the principle that good liaison between their respective communications teams is a prerequisite of effective, co-ordinated and informed communications that will be of benefit to the public.

To facilitate such an approach, it is important that both organisations recognise their respective areas of responsibility and where their communications activity is likely to overlap.

The role of the Commissioner is new and the Home Office has resisted developing national guidance governing the communications model individual Commissioners should follow, instead leaving it to individual Commissioners and Chief Constables to develop their own working arrangements. Whilst this protocol seeks to create a framework within which both the Commissioner and the Chief Constable will seek to operate, it is inevitable that it will take time for both organisations to develop an approach towards communications that best serves the public. Accordingly, those charged with operating within this protocol, and the organisations they represent, should acknowledge that a degree of flexibility will be required and a process of trial and some error is likely before an effective, day-to-day working practice is established.

### **The Police and Crime Commissioner, Nottinghamshire**

The Commissioner has a wide range of responsibilities which include local community safety issues and crime reduction as well as policing. To achieve this, he can commission services from organisations such as Community Safety Partnerships and Criminal Justice Agencies.

Other key duties of the Commissioner include:

- Control of the local budget for policing and community safety
- Setting the amount of locally-raised council tax that goes towards policing
- Producing a Police and Crime Plan which includes local and national policing priorities

- Promoting joint working between the police and community safety partners
- Holding the Chief Constable to account for performance on behalf of local people
- Appointing (and, if required, dismissing) the Chief Constable
- Publishing an annual report to keep people informed
- Ensuring that public priorities are acted upon, victims are consulted and that the most vulnerable individuals are not overlooked
- Addressing national issues as well as local concerns

## **The Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire Police**

Although a close working relationship between the Commissioner and the Chief Constable will be necessary, the Commissioner cannot restrict the operational independence of Nottinghamshire Police or its Chief Constable.

The Chief Constable's responsibilities include:

- Direction and control over the Force's officers and staff
- Day-to-day responsibility for operational policing in the county
- Supporting the Commissioner in the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan
- Tackling national threats such as terrorism, public disorder, cyber-incidents and organised crime
- Managing complaints against the Force, officers and staff except those made against the Chief Constable
- Day-to-day responsibility for the financial management of the Force
- Reviewing opportunities to work with other police forces and organisations

## **The relationship between the Commissioner and the Chief Constable**

The Commissioner's role is to represent the public and to hold Nottinghamshire Police to account for the totality of policing in the county. As such the Commissioner is required to review, and on occasions challenge, the Force's anti-crime strategies, its use of resources and its performance.

However, the relationship between the Commissioner and the Chief Constable is expected to be fundamentally one of mutual support, given that both parties share the same long-term aspirations of reducing crime and enhancing the safety and well-being of the public.

Accordingly, there will be opportunities for proactive, confidence-raising, communications activity to be undertaken by both sets of communications teams in order to improve public confidence and provide community reassurance.

## **2. Principles**

It is acknowledged that the Commissioner and the Force are independent of one another. They have different constitutional responsibilities, their own distinct functions and provide different services.

The Commissioner has a statutory duty and electoral mandate to hold the Force to account on behalf of the public and to undertake an important scrutiny function. The

Chief Constable alone is responsible for the day to day operational policing of Nottinghamshire.

Because of these constitutional differences, both organisations recognise that there will be times when they seek to communicate different messages to the public.

In such circumstances both communications teams will strive to keep each other informed in advance of publication, wherever feasible, to allow the preparation of a “balancing” comment or response.

Equally, it is acknowledged that the unforeseen does happen and that the best laid plans can sometimes go awry. The aim of both organisations will always be to maintain a quality information service to the public by working together in a constructive and timely manner.

However, proactively seeking out opportunities for mutually supportive and joint communications activity will benefit both organisations in achieving the shared objective of promoting and enhancing public safety. Working together – and being seen to work together – is likely to enhance the quality, consistency and reliability of information released to the public and thereby the reputation of each organisation.

### **3. Purpose**

This Communications protocol intends to:

- ensure effectiveness, transparency, clarity and timeliness of action when matters concerning one or both organisations are, or are deemed likely to be, of public / media interest.
- make clear the areas of responsibility and associated working practices across both organisations to enable a coherent and informed response to public / media interest.
- ensure a good working relationship between the two organisations, with particular emphasis on the respective communications leads.
- maximise the opportunity to promote and enhance awareness of shared messages, for example on issues of performance, crime reduction, and community reassurance.
- minimise the potential for conflicting or contradictory messages to be disseminated publicly due to lack of communication between the two organisations.

The protocol does not, under any circumstances, seek to place restrictions on, or influence the message of, either organisation.

### **4. Scope**

In the age of 24/7 media and the explosion in the public’s use of social and digital media platforms as communications conduits, the communications staff of both organisations have at their disposal a wide variety of channels through which they can communicate with the public. This protocol governs both proactive and reactive

communications activity by both organisations and through any communication channel in relation to those matters of mutual interest to both organisations which are considered sensitive or which have the potential to damage the reputation of either organisation.

“Communications”, for the purpose of this protocol, are defined thus:

- Media releases and written statements provided to the print and broadcast media
- Interviews and opinion pieces provided to the print and broadcast media
- Briefings, interviews, verbal statements and press conferences
- Campaign / publicity material, including posters, brochures, leaflets, newsletters and reports
- Media information, blogs and commentary released across each organisation’s social and digital media sites
- Broadcast documentaries and public interest programmes
- Information published on each organisation’s website

The protocol does not govern communications activity relating to day-to-day operational incidents (other than major crimes and those issues which threaten either organisation’s reputation).

## **5. Aims**

The specific aims of this protocol are:

- To facilitate, where appropriate, a joint approach towards communications activity
- To enhance the quality, accuracy, transparency and timeliness of public information
- To promote and enhance awareness of shared messages on performance, crime reduction and community reassurance
- To promote a positive image of the Commissioner and the Force, increasing public confidence in policing and community safety
- To promote a close working relationship between the Commissioner and the Force, sharing information on matters that have a significant impact on the reputation of either organisation
- To minimise the possibility of conflicting messages being issued due to lack of advance communication between the two parties
- To increase dialogue between the two organisations at a communications officer level

## **6. Operation**

It is acknowledged that, among other issues, policing priorities, overall performance, the policing budget and the overall effectiveness of the Force will be subjects about which the Commissioner will seek to proactively communicate.

Therefore, one of the prime functions of the Commissioner's communications officers will be to publicise the objectives and success of the Police and Crime Plan, against which the Commissioner will be judged by the electorate.

A significant proportion of the Force's externally-focused communications activity will be about specific operational matters, making public appeals, publicising operational successes and managing the communications pertaining to serious incidents.

There will be opportunities for both communications teams to collaborate on joint, proactive communications initiatives, for example crime prevention campaigns and public engagement activity in its broadest sense. It is also anticipated that on occasion, issues will surface which combine elements of performance and operational activity, raising wider questions of effectiveness and efficiency. In these events discussions will take place as required between both communications team leads to agree appropriate communications strategies and to agree which team will take the lead role.

Agreement will also be reached at this stage over the content of information to be issued and who will undertake its dispatch and follow-up. Wherever practicable, associated communications products will be shared with each organisation prior to dispatch.

A log will be kept and shared by both organisations of information provided in relation to high profile or politically sensitive inquiries.

Should the two communications teams be unable to agree issues of strategy or responsibility, these issues will be referred to the Commissioner (or nominee) and the Deputy Chief Constable (or nominee) for resolution.

Specific operational commitments required to enable the effective implementation of this protocol are as follows:

- Communications professionals in each organisation will inform each other at the earliest opportunity of likely or actual relevant communications activity, as defined in this protocol
- Communications professionals in each organisation will manage the activity in the most appropriate way, being mindful of issues of confidentiality. This could include (1) sharing key messages or deciding on a joint statement, briefing or press conference, (2) an agreement that one organisation is the lead partner, (3) separate activity, reflecting that one organisation may disagree with the other's position or proposed course of action
- Material issued by either party, which relates to the activities or work of the other party, will be shared, in advance where possible, with the relevant communications team

- Material issued publicly by both parties will be placed on their respective websites, and shared electronically with a named individual in the respective communications teams
- All press releases relating to information governed by this protocol will be shared via email at the time of dispatch with the other organisation's communications department
- Drafts of direct marketing, social media articles/commentary and other information, material or strategies relating to information governed by this protocol will be exchanged where appropriate. Consultation, where necessary, regarding content will take place in a timely fashion
- An archive of material issued will be maintained by both organisations
- A record of media enquiries, where the enquiries potentially impinge on the activity or reputation of the other party, will be kept and shared in a timely fashion
- The lead communications professionals in each organisation will meet regularly to discuss strategies to achieve the long-term aim of reassuring the public, to develop joint key messages and to discuss challenges facing the parties, thereby ensuring early consideration of any issues
- In instances of sensitive, or conflicting, positions, communications professionals representing each organisation will keep each other informed on a 'no surprises' basis. Any confidentiality or embargo relating to this information will naturally be upheld
- Communications professionals in both organisations agree to respond to requests for information or other support in a timely fashion, with the minimum response being an acknowledgment of any request within one working day.
- Contact details will be provided for requirements outside normal working hours.

## **8. Review**

This protocol will be reviewed six months after its implementation date.

## **9. Key Contacts**

### **Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner**

Chief Executive:

- Name
- Tel
- Email

Police and Crime Commissioner:

- Name
- Tel

- Email

Communications Lead:

- Name
- Tel
- Email

Nottinghamshire Police

Chief Constable:

- Chris Eyre
- Tel
- Email

Chief Responsible Officer:

- Paul Scarrott, Deputy Chief Constable
- Tel
- Email

Head of Communications:

- Matt Tapp
- 07900 408032
- [Matt.tapp@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Matt.tapp@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.uk)

**Signed on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Nottinghamshire**

Signature

Print

Position

Date

**Signed on behalf of Nottinghamshire Police**

Signature

Print

Position

Date