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Have you got what it takes?

Applying and demonstrating strong governance

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Important facts

Governance is the act, process or power of governing an organisation.

Good governance allows organisations to do the right thing, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, open, honest and accountable way.

A good governance framework will include the systems, processes, cultures and values used to direct and control organisations and through which they answer to, get involved with and, where appropriate, lead their communities.

These arrangements in public services are very closely watched and sometimes criticised. Significant failings attract huge attention – as they should – and one significant failing can affect a whole sector.

Police and crime commissioners (PCCs) are vitally important to everyone. Good governance will support PCCs in providing quality policing by being open in their decision-making and making sure their chief constables answer for their decisions and actions.

Good governance will allow a PCC to pursue their vision effectively as well as provide ways of controlling and managing risk. All PCCs should aim to meet the standards of the best, and governance arrangements should not only be effective, but also be seen to be effective.

Background

Good governance has been a growing area of focus since the early 1990s. Various documents on good practice have been produced and improved as reform has taken place. Governance, and in particular local accountability, has played an increasingly important role in public services. Below are some of the main milestones in developing good governance frameworks in local government.

- **The report of the Committee on the Financial Aspects of Corporate Governance (The Cadbury Report 1992) identified three essential principles for corporate governance – openness, integrity and accountability.**
- **The Committee on Standards in Public Life examined concerns about the conduct of people who hold public office and published its first report in May 1995. This defined seven general principles, known as the Nolan principles. These are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and integrity.**
- **In 2004 the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services published a set of common principles that all public-sector organisations should adopt. The Good Governance**

Standard for Public Services built upon the Nolan Principles for the behaviour of individuals in public life. It did so by setting out six core principles that should form the backbone of the governance arrangements of all organisations. Organisations should:

1. focus on the organisation's purpose and outcomes for citizens;
 2. clearly define functions and roles;
 3. promote values of good governance;
 4. make informed and open decisions and manage risk;
 5. develop the ability and skills of the governing body; and
 6. involve stakeholders (those with an interest) and make accountability real.
- **In 2007 the Chartered Institute of Professional Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) published 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Authorities - Interim Guidance Note for Police Authorities and Forces in England and Wales'. This guidance is currently being revised to take account of the move to offices of police and crime commissioners.**

By following a strong framework of good governance, PCCs can make sure they provide good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public involvement and, ultimately, good outcomes for everyone.

More information

What guidance is available?

What are the main principles of good governance?

The guidance, published in 2007, mentioned above is currently being revised for the move to PCCs. However, the main principles of good governance for PCCs and police forces are to:

- **focus on the purpose of the organisation and on the outcomes for the community and create and put into practice a vision for the local area;**
- **work together to achieve a shared purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;**
- **promote and demonstrate these values of good governance by upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;**
- **take informed and open decisions, which are checked effectively and where risk is managed;**
- **develop the ability of members and officers to be effective; and**
- **involve local people and others with an interest to make sure they answer to the public in an effective way.**

How will PCCs make decisions and hold chief constables to account now that the Police Authority Committee structure will no longer apply?

PCCs will need to approve the good governance framework for their office soon after they are in position. The framework is likely to include a range of approaches for how decisions can be taken by the PCC and how the chief constable will be held to account.

The range of approaches would go from the commissioner making a formal decision (having considered written reports), to holding a formal public meeting with stakeholders, for example working with a partnership board. Similar options are available for holding the chief constable to account.

Is good governance just about having lots of documents?

The guidance provides principles as well as options for policies, systems and arrangements so the PCC can carry out their business properly.

However, this framework alone is not enough. Without strong leadership by the PCC and staff, good governance will not exist. As a result, it is essential that the PCC, and particularly their officers, set the tone for the organisation by promoting and demonstrating the value of good governance and upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.

What practical steps can be taken to make sure good governance takes place?

There are many good examples of policies, systems and controls which can help to fix in place principles of good governance. The chief executive and chief financial officer will provide advice and support for the most appropriate local framework.

A good example of how good governance will practically support the PCC is in the development of the Police and Crime Plan.

Effective arrangements will make sure that the plan is the product of effective consultation with the public, and community-safety and criminal-justice partners. This will allow the PCC to develop their ambitions and aims for reducing crime.

What happens if a good governance framework is not put in place?

The Policing Protocol issued by the Home Secretary says that PCCs, like other policing partners, must keep to the seven Nolan principles. The good governance principles have been developed from these. If a PCC fails to keep to them, they could be left open to criticism and negative media attention, which could result in a lack of public confidence.