

# Police Fire & Crime Panel Survey Findings

## Executive Summary

In November 2019 the members of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels (Association) voted to move to a non-subscription membership. In December following elections a full complement of executive members was created with an immediate task to establish how the Association could add value to Panels in England and Wales with minimal operational funding. Any work undertaken by the Association would be based upon what is achievable by employing self-help methods using the efforts, experience and skill sets of the executive committee members.

The executive members objective was to identify the issues and concerns experienced by the majority of Panels and channel work stream efforts into addressing these as a priority. To help achieve this objective, a limited survey questionnaire was produced and sent to all Panel Chairmen and Support Officers. The aim of the survey being to analyse responses to identify common themes or issues experienced by Panels which in turn would be used to prioritise the Associations future work.

The survey consisted of 9 questions with menu driven answers and where appropriate responders were invited to provide textual feedback. Survey responses were analysed by the executive committee members for common themes at its May 2020 meeting.

Five workstreams were identified via the survey which will drive the work of the Associations for the next 18 months. The secondary aim of survey is to evaluate how panels are performing with respect to the challenge and support functions of respective Police (Fire) & Crime Commissioners and encourage the adoption of good practice to help engender quality value add relationships.

The panels role is one of Commissioner “Challenge and Support” in non-operational Policing and where applicable Fire & Rescue. Panels have an important role in challenging the Commissioner’s decisions and the work programmes that are implemented. The Association believes that appropriate challenge of a Commissioner takes the form of establishing, on behalf of the public, that sound logic, reasoning and good practice is apparent in the decisions making process. The “Support” function can only truly exist when the Commissioner / Panel relationship is established on a sound and trusting relationship. Panels should be encouraged, willing and able to be positively engaged in all aspects of the Commissioners work as a “Critical Friend” providing tremendous value to both parties.

The Association should promote Panel good practice working, share positive experiences and encourage cross-sector learning. The results of this survey are the start of this process.

## Background

The Executive Members of the National Association of Police Fire & Crime Panels (NAPFCP) agreed at its April meeting to create a survey questionnaire to be sent to all panel Chairman and Support Officers. The survey aim was to obtain cross panel feedback through the responses received which would be used to shape the direction and hence emphasis of NAPFCP work moving forward.

## NAPFCP Executive Committee

The executive committee consists of 10 volunteer panel members whose appointments are confirmed at the AGM held in November. Approximately 50% of the committee changed last year due to panel changes following the May local elections and some taking retirement from public office.

At the AGM, members voted for a zero-subscription fee to apply and that work undertaken by the executive committee would be on a self-help basis. It is therefore important for the NAPFCP to concentrate on what panels believe are important aspects of panel working, remain independent of constraints imposed by a panel subscription relying solely on the Home Office grant and use the skills and expertise that exist within the volunteer executive committee. The committee is made up of longstanding panel members, some going back to 2012 with some newer members appointed to panels for the first time in 2019. Many are members of their local Community Safety Partnership.

The executive committee consists of

Chairman	John Gili-Ross (Essex PFCP Co-opted member)
Vice Chair	Cllr Stuart Sansome (Vice Chairman South Yorkshire PCP)
Vice Chair	Evan Morris MBE (Chairman Cheshire PCP Co-opted member) ex FRS senior officer
Member	Cllr Barry Young (Lincolnshire PCP)
Member	Cllr Richard Britton (Chairman Wiltshire PCP)
Member	Cllr Mohammed Iqbal (Chairman West Yorkshire PCP)
Member	Chairman Cllr Gill Mercer (Chairman Northants PFCP)
Member	Suma Harding (Nottinghamshire PCP) Serving Magistrate
Member	Cllr Joyce Welsh (Northumbria PCP)
Member	Cllr David Reilly (Chairman Warwickshire PCP)

## The Panel Survey and Questionnaire

The survey consisted of nine questions, reflecting the main issues and concerns raised at regional and national training events, LGA workshops and the AGM. Drop down menu responses as well as free flow textual answers were enabled for certain questions. Individuals were given an opportunity in the last question to add additional points not raised elsewhere.

A total of 38 responses were received from Panels in England and Wales and these analysed to determine common themes or issues to help determine NAPFCP work area priorities.

Twenty panels submitted a response to the survey including:

Bedfordshire  
Cambridgeshire  
Cheshire  
Cleveland  
Dyfed-Powys  
Essex  
Hertfordshire  
Humberside  
Lancashire  
Lincolnshire  
Norfolk  
North Yorkshire

Northampton PFCP  
Nottinghamshire  
South Yorkshire  
Suffolk  
Surrey  
Thames Valley  
West Mercia  
West Midlands  
West Yorkshire  
Wiltshire

In almost all cases the support officer and panel chairman provided a response. In the week prior to closure a reminder was sent to all panel chairman and support officers that had at that time not responded. This was followed up by direct contact being attempted by exec committee members using email and phone calls to chairman and support officers.

Early in the process it was found that some local authority mail servers may have been blocking emails and hence the NAPFCP survey requests. Where this was found to be the case, the survey was resent to the individuals private email addresses.

It appears that a number of panel chairman and support officers appeared unavailable despite attempts using different media which may be due to the pandemic leading to significant changes to work practices.

### Survey Summary

The outcome of the survey is displayed pictorially by pie chart percentages using either Yes or No fixed answers or set question menu options taking the following form:

1. The Association should not spend time on this.
2. This would be of some use to my Panel.
3. I don't have a view on whether or not the Association should further this project.
4. My Panel would find this helpful to PCPs and welcomes the Association taking this forward.
5. This is most relevant to Panels and the Association should give this project priority

Using the above format where applicable, the “total in favour values” for each question uses the cumulative percentage figures for menu options 2, 4 and 5 in the pie charge breakdown at the end of the report.

Question 1 asked if panels believed they had sufficient or appropriate powers to carry out effective scrutiny of their Commissioner. There was an equal 50:50 split.

Relatively few text responses were received for this question. Those received suggest there are some underlying trust issues between the Panel and the Commissioner.

Question 2 - asked should the NAPFCP lobby the Home Office, Government, MP's or LGA where deemed appropriate. A total of 89.5% of respondents were in favour.

Question 3 - asked should the NAPFCP work with the APCC to develop working practice models between Panels and Commissioners. A total of 76.3% were in favour.

Question 4 - asked should the NAPFCP undertake a study of the various methods employed between Panels and the Commissioners in the scrutiny of their work, to promote best practice and cross sector development? A total of 78.9% were in favour. 15.8% said the NAPFCP should not spend time on this.

Question 5 - asked would your panel benefit from having greater understanding of relevant central government plans and timelines for large police projects and programmes. A total of 81.6% were in favour.

Question 6 - asked should the NAPFCP develop and publish Position Statements on key issues facing policing. A total of 60% were in favour.

Question 7 - asked should the Association develop a national and local communications strategy to help clarify and promote the role, responsibilities and remit of Panels? A total of 81.6% were in favour of this.

Question 8 - asked would it be helpful for your Panel to know how, and to what extent, other Panels utilise the Home Office grant? A total of 68.4% were in favour of this.

Question 9 - asked if the survey had omitted relevant topics relating to the role of Panels, what was missing and the benefit provided to Panels. 19 text responses were received. All responses appear in the survey analysis at the end of this report.

## Conclusions

A breakdown of survey responses appears at the end of this report. Analysing the results and in particular the text responses, the following topics are recognised as the main source of panel concerns and /or interest and are expected to form the basis of NAPFCP workstreams over the next two years. The form and depth of work undertaken will be agreed by the exec members and a topic lead for each workstream will be assigned.

- Commissioner and Chief Constable senior appointments
- Complaints against the Commissioner, Police and FRS Senior Staff
- Promotion of best practice for Panel activities and scrutiny of the Commissioner
- Panel lack of influence with commissioners -leads to distrust and poor relationship.
- Promote the Panels role within policing (and fire and rescue) to the public

# Appendix A

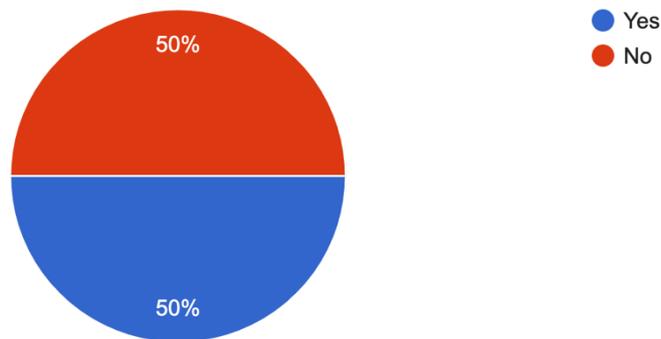
## Full Survey Results and Outcomes

A breakdown of the survey questions and responses are shown below. Some questions have been truncated by the survey tool. To retain clarity and as necessary, the full question has been added before the response.

Text answers that appear for questions 1, 6 and 9 are as received.

Q1 Do you believe that Panels have sufficient and/or appropriate powers to carry out effective scrutiny of a Commissioner?

38 responses



If you answered "No" to the last question, please state up to 3 additional powers you believe Panel should have and why.

### Commissioner and Chief Constable Senior Appointments

The power of veto over Deputy PCC appointments would seem to be more appropriate than the power of veto over Chief Constable appointments (considering the latter have already followed out a clear, HR assisted process whereas with the former there is potential for cronyism and a far less transparent approach).

Provide a power to Panels to veto a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner Appointment

Requirement for Panel to pre-scrutinise more decisions (not just precept, P&C Plan and senior appointments); power to call in any decision; power for a Panel supermajority vote to overrule (not just temporarily veto) a decision.

In terms of confirmation of Chief Constable and precept proposal, we have veto and nothing beyond. After that the Panel has no role. There is a strong case of some form of compulsory mediation in both cases. Secondly, for the appointment of Deputy Chief Constable, the panel should have more involvement than just a confirmation of the appointment weeks after the Chief Constable having taken the position.

I personally think the ability to challenge and to use the power of the press to raise any issues of concern are sufficient. I think some members of my panel would think that there should be additional powers around a second veto for the confirmation hearings and precept.

As often referenced, the Panels need 'more teeth' and additional powers would give them more influence, rather than effectively rubber-stamping decisions, perhaps having the capacity to 'call-in' decisions of a certain nature and to have more of a significant role relating to appointments would be a start.

There is confusion over which PCC support staff appointments should involve the Panel. Inconsistencies around the appointments of Deputy CC's and Deputies for the PCC. These could be better aligned.

Ability for involvement in suspension proceedings as well as appointment of senior officers both in CC office and Chief Constable.

### *Complaints Related Comments*

The ability to deal with complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner are completely none existent, and as they currently stand, "pointless". The Panel should either have powers to effectively investigate complaints and impose sanctions or have "complaints" removed from their remit completely. Strengthen the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to give Panels and sub-groups of Panels the power to call any persons who in their view could assist Panels to give evidence and provide information, to facilitate proper scrutiny of the PCC.

Utilise the professional expertise of HMICFRS and require them (via a request from the Panel) to be involved in the suspension review process providing the PCC, Chief Constable and Police and Crime Panel with a professional view on the suspension of a Chief Constable before and during the suspension period.

Power to do investigations on complaints,

Commissioning of investigation by a third party into complaint matters. Panels would lack the capacity and arguably independence to do justice to this but further to a recent high-profile complaints matter, it is apparent that this element is sorely lacking from Panels' powers and it would lend greater credence to any report or findings. The Home Office has committed to this over the years but no change has yet come about.

Require early intervention following suspension of CC, we don't have that under regs, we play no role until later.

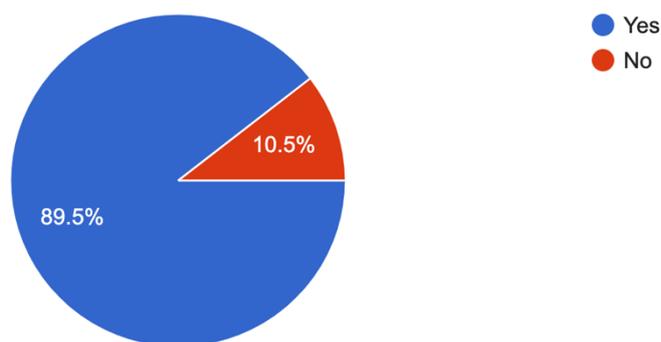
### *Miscellaneous Comments*

- Members feel that there are very limited powers to influence what the PCC does. Therefore more powers to limit the level of Precept annually; the ability to require HMICFRS to meet with Panel annually to consider the performance of the Force and by association the PCC and require the HMICFRS to consult the PCP as part of the process.

- Strategic decision making by PCC via a statutory forward plan that could be called in prior to some key decisions being made without PCP knowledge or consultation.
- When the Panel is attempting to scrutinise or a Task and Finish group is attempting to scrutinise a particular piece of work that has been headed up by a senior police officer, then the panel or group should have the authority to seek his/her attendance.
- More powers of sanction to make the PCC more dependent upon the support of the Panel. The Power to require the Chief Constable to attend the Panel under specific circumstances in order to avoid having the PCC easily to hide behind "that's operational".
- Include some scrutiny of operational policing quarterly reports on how they are performing isn't enough
- Being a County Councillor & Past member of our Police Authority, there is so much more we can do, and use our local knowledge & expertise more effectively.
- I would like to see powers more in line with the police authority powers

Q2 Do you believe it would be worthwhile and appropriate for the Association to lobby the Home Office, Government, MP's or the LGA where deemed appropriate.

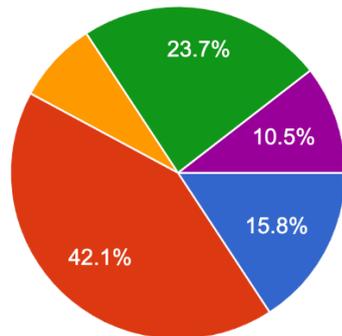
38 responses



Q3 The relationship between Panels and PCCs can vary widely and different working practices between the two have developed over several years. Do you believe the Association should work with the APCC to develop typical working practice models for possible use by Panels and Commissioners?

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38 responses

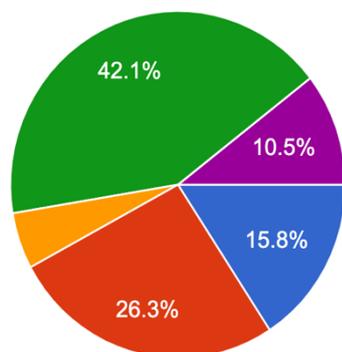


- The Association should not spend time on this.
- This would be of some use to my Panel.
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- My Panel would find this helpful to PCPs and welcomes the Association taking this forward.
- This is most relevant to Panels and the Association should give this project pri...

Q4 PCPs have developed ways to carry out their role to support their Commissioner in the delivery of a Police and Crime Plan or Fire and Rescue Plan. This work often involves sub-committees, Lead Member arrangements, Task and Finish Groups often with the Commissioner's Office. Should the Association undertake a study of the various methods employed, the resulting outcomes and any lessons learnt to promote best practice and cross sector development?

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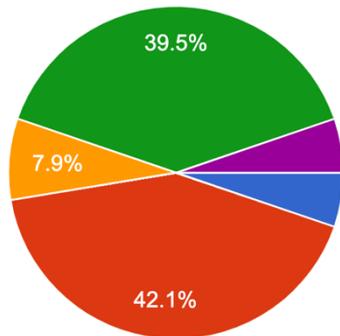


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Q5 Changes in the provision of fixed and mobile IT services and equipment is leading to significant impact on Commissioner's budgets. Would your panel benefit from having greater understanding of relevant central government plans and timelines for large police projects and programmes?

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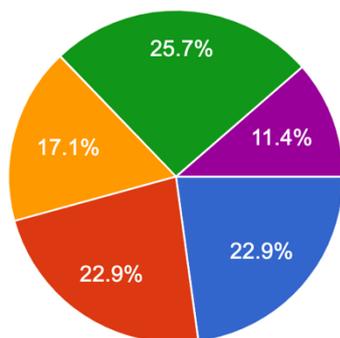


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Q6 In order to promote the role of Panels should the Association work with its members to develop and publish Position Statements on the key issues facing policing? (e.g. Complaints Handling, Coronavirus ACT, Equitable funding for CSP's).

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35 responses



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- This is most relevant to Panels and the Association should give this project priority.

Q6a If you have indicated your panel would benefit from position statements on key issues facing policing, please state the area of most interest and give reasons why. 20 responses

- Multi-agency and collaborative working arrangements, responsibilities and accountabilities, including with national policing bodies, such as NCA, BTP, ActionFraud, SFO, Security Services,

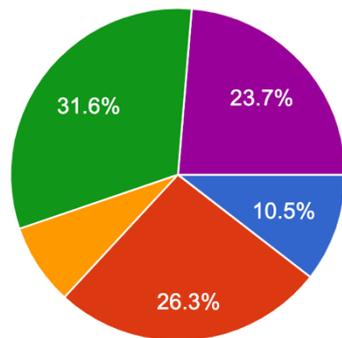
HMICFRS, and collaborative programmes such as Counter Terrorism, Prevent, organised crime (gangs, slavery, people trafficking, child sexual exploitation), etc.

- Statements should focus on the key issues facing PCCs, as a means of challenging & supporting them in their roles - commenting on issues such as the developing role and functions of PCCs (reviewing police complaints, extending their role in the criminal justice system), supporting their calls for more action around victim support, for example. However, care will need to be taken to ensure that statements reflect the collective position of PC(F)Ps, not just those represented on the Executive body.
- Complaints handling
- Effective scrutiny, PCP Plan, PCP internal Budget, use of the HO grant - as well as a range of key issues to promote consistency across PCPs such as Covid-19, Cybercrime etc.
- It would give Panels more of a platform within the public eye, most people do not know the Panels exist, let alone there is also an Association - so to release a statement from the Association on behalf of the Panels would be hugely beneficial
- Positions statements are useful in most cases especially in handling of complaints. This is for fairness for both sides and transparency.
- To be able to show we are being proactive and holding the PCC to account as a critical friend
- complaints handling
- The key issues in Wales differ from those in England, Powers should be devolved to the Welsh Assembly, and we meet the WLGA fairly regularly in Cardiff, yet answer to London!
- Funding. This has just been played with and never addressed the major funding issues and is the largest area of concern we have.
- Community Safety Partnerships - we do not have any contact with them and would be useful to know if others do
- Use of Home Office grants- many panels do not know if or how their grant is being spent and we do not want to lose the grant because panels are not using their grant Allowances for Panel members- wide discrepancy between panels
- To ensure consistency across the country, helps with transparency.
- See requirement for website below, which would also assist with info and sharing best practice and ideas.
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- Public order and complaints.
- Budgetary constraints
- IT projects Body Worn Camera Policy Remote Meeting Guidance
- Police resources and day-to-day management thereof in order to maximise police visibility.
- I think it would be helpful to in relation to any new or emerging issues as they are identified
- Broader knowledge of what is expected
- I'm not sure how a collective position statements can be developed given the different areas we work in - a rural area has very different issues, policing priorities to an urban area

Q7 To the general public, the part played by Panels in respect to Commissioners, Policing and the Fire & Rescue Service is generally unclear. Should the Association develop a national and local communications strategy to help clarify and promote the role, responsibilities and remit of Panels?

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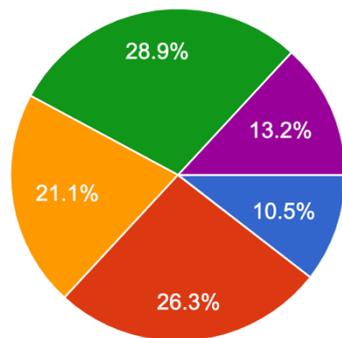
38 responses



- The Association should not spend time on this.
- This would be of some use to my Panel.
- I don't have a view on whether or not the Association should further this project.
- My Panel would find this helpful and welcomes the Association taking this forward.
- This is most relevant to Panels and the Association should give this project pri...

Q8 Different Panels have differing approaches to the use of the Home Office grant. Would it be helpful for your Panel to know how, and to what extent, other Panels utilise the grant?

38 responses



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Q9 If you feel this survey as written does not cover relevant topics relating to the role of Panels, please provide details of what you believe is missing and in particular the benefit for Panels. 19 responses

- Analysis of whether more grant funding would be beneficial. To my mind, the amount is generous for basic administration, training, etc, but insufficient to commission in-depth research and analysis, or to commission public surveys or to communicate regularly with the press and councillors. Our panel relies entirely on the OPCC to write our reports; that is vulnerable to manipulation by a Commissioner wishing to suppress or spin a message. Our host authority has neither the resources nor the expertise to conduct research in-house for the Panel, so we would need to commission external consultants, and hence would require a larger budget

than we now have. A grant of more than £60k but less than £100k would enable panels to do significantly more proactive research, analysis and communication.

- I believe that the Association could explore the matter of retention and training of members on panels. While I appreciate the difficulties surrounding elected members, I do feel it would be beneficial to explore any avenues that would assist in permitting consistency of membership which in turn assists decision making processes.
- From my perspective the most problematic part of the remit given to panels is the complaints function. I think there could be a role for the Association in highlighting the scope for improvements to this function as currently organised and/or working with government and other relevant parties to identify practical changes that might be made.
- In relation to Q8 - my Panel fully utilises the full grant and so the only benefit I see for WY from some work on this is that the Home Office may come to a view that full grant allocations are unnecessary if a large percentage are not taken up. I think it would be helpful to have an outline work programme for the NAPFCP. The key lines of enquiry for the COVID-19 were really helpful (although too late for our first Panel meeting). I think an early view of any emerging issues would be very helpful but it would also be helpful to be notified if something is potentially on the horizon if NAPFCP is seen as a first point of contact.
- The Association should act as the voice of Panels on emerging/new legislation with Government and support the development of best practice in these areas - for example the new Remote Meeting regulations and scrutiny impacts of the Coronavirus is a good example of where the Association can make a positive difference. This should be treated as a priority project. Also going forward could the work of the Association look to maximise the use of online technology - this could provide the Association with additional flexibility to engage with its membership on key issues. Please note, this is a combined response from the Lead Support Officer and Chairman of the Panel.
- Q2 - Now that the NAPFCP has moved to a fee-free model, and membership is not determined by a Panel's ability to use the HO grant to pay for an annual subscription, there is nothing to prevent it from lobbying. Representing the collective voices of Panels on relevant issues and being a trusted conduit for consultation is exactly what it should be doing.
- Q3 - The refreshed Panel guidance, recently published by CfPS-LGA, provides examples of good practice. The current Regional and National networking arrangements provide excellent ways of sharing and developing best practice, and Frontline Consulting's help in facilitating these should not be underestimated.
- Q4 - Again, the refreshed Panel guidance by CfPS-LGA provides examples of good practice. Regional networks & national conferences offer ample opportunity to share and develop best practice.
- Q8 - Either a simple survey or asking the Home Office to share an overview would work if there is a desire to do this. More importantly, perhaps, the NAPFCP might encourage all Panels to make use of their grant, given that Home Office officials have warned they are finding it increasingly hard to defend an underspend in this budget.
- Q9 - The points covered at Q6 (albeit v difficult) and Q7 are definitely the sorts of things the NAPFCP should concentrate on: those things where it can add value, rather than repeat or duplicate work that has already been done or is being done elsewhere. It is also essential that Panels are kept well informed about what the NAPFCP is doing.
- Greater clarity on the speed of change to the integration of the Three Blue Light organisations, and suggested models for the appropriate scrutiny forum{s}
- Effective recruitment of Independent Members

- As a support officer I would find a forum most beneficial where I could type a question that all other support officers could answer - for instance, I wanted to know what platform other panels were using for virtual meetings - that would be great to put into a forum. Support officers feel very alone in this job as no-one they work alongside does the same job, it would enable them together somewhere to share their queries and work alongside others doing the same job.
- Producing a standard MOU for PCP and PCPs
- I think it would be useful to have training courses for Panel members, at introductory, intermediate/advanced levels. This should be a paid course to ensure the quality of training would be high. The courses should run at least once/twice a year in different parts of the Country. The National Conference, although very good, doesn't really offer training in the basics for new Panel members. The LGA courses, again are good, but assume a certain amount of knowledge on the part of Panel members.
- I feel that this survey was quite difficult in so much the relationship between all Panels and their Commissioner are so varied. We are most fortunate that we have an excellent relationship with our present Commissioner but this might not be the same if we have a change
- With regard to the issue of lobbying I had understood that the Home Office have already ruled out Panels using their grant to undertake this. I think it would be helpful to move away from that word and try to position the Association as the go-to consultee for the Home Office to discuss proposals etc with. This is similar relationship which the National Association of School Admissions Clerks have tried to develop with the DfE over the years. I think the word lobbying is proving to be unhelpful and a bit inflammatory whereas I think the Association could exert the same levels of influence albeit by not using that term.
- We feel there should be a web site presence for sharing ideas and as a forum for members and officers. Some form of on line training modules would be useful e.g. complaint handling, move to Fire Authority etc. Particularly an issue for large area such as West Mercia where training is a challenge.
- It should be more specific to Wales, e.g. we do not cover the Fire responsibilities, and we require more bilingualism, (Why is this questionnaire in English only ? !!)
- The issue of public involvement in Panel meetings would be worth looking at, particularly in terms of widening the scope for public questions
- My Panel would benefit from a more detailed understanding of the national uplift programme of recruitment, training and induction
- Other studies to get a view on best practice that can be passed on to other panels