

PFCC Decision Report

Report reference number: 058/2020

Classification: Not protectively marked

Title of report: Publication Protocol and Processes

Area of county / stakeholders affected: All PFCC staff

Report by: Darren Horsman (Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement)

Date of report: 5 May 2020

Enquiries to: Darren Horsman (Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement)

1. Purpose of the report

To approve the updated Publication Protocol and Processes.

2. Recommendations

That the updated Publication Protocol and Processes attached at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 are approved for adoption.

3. Benefits of the proposal

The Publication Protocol was introduced in 2019 to provide transparent and clear accountability for the publication of material by the PFCC's office.

A more comprehensive transparency section was also developed on the PFCC website to support the PFCC's aim to be publicly accountable and provide the public with the information they need to understand and participate in their work.

Other changes to support this shift included the introduction of a two stage sign off process for the publication of material on certain pages on the PFCC website and an additional accuracy check on the publication of decisions sheets.

4. Background and proposal

The Publication Protocol was discussed by SMT in December 2018, again in January 2019 and again in May 2019. At the discussion in May 2019 the publication protocol and

processes were agreed and a one-year review date was set so we could consider if the approach was delivering the required reassurance.

It was also agreed to add to the current website additional functionality to allow certain pages to be locked down so a two stage sign off is required prior to material being publicly visible. This also creates an auditable trail for those pages with this additional sign off. As this new level of sign off created significant additional steps and restricts the normal way a page would be updated it was agreed that this would only be used for key areas of the website rather than for all pages. This provided accountability at an appropriate level while ensuring the overall publication process is timely and efficient.

A new transparency page was also developed on the PFCC website that links to the information identified within the Specified Information Orders relating to Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, Essex Police and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. This provides a single location for members of the public to access a complete set of information.

The revised protocol also continues the process of regular dip samples to ensure that information is still accurate and being published in a timely manner.

The protocol and processes have now been in place for a year and have been successful in providing greater accuracy and transparency. Some modification to the processes has been required to ensure the new functionality on the website is working appropriately. We have also adapted this functionality to improve the way it works.

A thorough audit of all published information was undertaken following the sign off of the protocol and processes and this resulted in a number of gaps being identified. All of these have now been resolved or they have been discussed and managed through SMT. Regular dip samples have also been undertaken as agreed.

The PFCC website was the subject of an external assessment in March 2020 by CoPaCC (An independent organisation formed in 2012 that monitors Police Governance in England and Wales) who assessed our compliance with the Specified Information Order. The assessment also included, for the first time, a mystery shopper exercise to assess the website's general accessibility and transparency. While we are waiting for the full results from the assessment, initial feedback has shown the website is fully compliant and working well. Once more detailed feedback is received, we will have the opportunity to further improve our site, which we intend to embrace.

Following the review of the protocol and processes, the documents have been updated to reflect several small improvements in some processes and the new responsibilities now in place as a result of changes to the PFCC's team structure. These are minor changes with the broad approach not needing further revision.

These documents will be reviewed again in three years or earlier if required due to changes in legislation, policies or team structure.

5. Alternative options considered and rejected

Alternative options were considered including centralising the publication of all items of the website to a single person and returning to a more distributed model of publication

without any checks. These two options were considered and are not recommended as they either do not provide sufficient control of the publication process or create a single point of failure within a highly bureaucratic process that needs to be robust and efficient.

6. Police and Crime Plan

The proposals set out in this report contribute to the delivery of the Police & Crime Plan and Fire & Rescue Plan by providing greater transparency to the public and contributing to confidence in the Services and the role of the Commissioner. The proposal also supports the Commissioner in fulfilling his statutory obligations

7. Police operational implications

The policy has been reviewed alongside statutory guidelines and legislation which are relevant to operational policing and how they publish information they generate. While this Policy will have no direct impact on operational policing its alignment with Essex Police policies and procedures will help to provide a coherent system for the public.

8. Financial implications

While the development of the new functionality on the website cost £1353 this was paid for out of the 2019-2020 budget and the decision to agree these updated documents has no additional financial costs.

9. Legal implications

This proposal will provide greater reassurance that we are meeting our publication obligations under the Specified Information Orders.

10. Staffing implications

All staff will be required to comply with the Publication Protocol and Processes as agreed.

11. Equality and Diversity implications

Meeting our transparency obligations is an important element in providing access to information for all communities, however, we recognise that a full accessibility assessment of our website is required to develop our understanding of how accessible it is for those with a sensory or cognitive impairment. This work has been planned for 2020-2021.

12. Risks

This proposal shows that the protocol and processes introduced in 2019 have successfully reduced the risk that information is published inadvertently, or necessary information isn't published.

13. Governance Boards


The updated protocol and processes attached for approval at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 were discussed at the PFCC's SMT on 6 May 2020 and approved in principal for adoption by the PFCC.

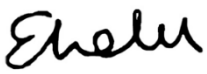
14. Background papers

Appendix 1 – Publication Protocol
Appendix 2 – Publication Process

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the OPFCC Chief Executive and Treasurer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.

Chief Executive / M.O. Sign: 
Print: Darren Horsman
Date: 6 January 2021

Chief Finance Officer / Treasurer Sign: 
Print: Elizabeth Helm
Date: 6 January 2021

Publication

Is the report for publication? YES
NO

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)

.....
.....N/A.....

If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet? YES NO 2. Of Appendix? YES NO

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

.....
.....N/A.....

Date redaction carried out:

Treasurer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign:

Print:

Chief Executive/Treasurer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 6 January 2021

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

.....
.....
.....

Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC