

PFCC Decision Report

Please ensure all sections below are completed

Report reference number: 173-22

Classification (e.g. Not protectively marked/restricted): **Not Protectively Marked**

Title of report: **Publication Protocol Review**

Area of county / stakeholders affected: **PFCC office staff**

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Date of report: 20/12/2022

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1. Executive Summary

This report sets out a revised Publication Protocol and Processes to be used by the PFCC's office to ensure the PFCC complies with their statutory disclosure requirements and provides sufficient transparency for the public and stakeholders to understand the work the PFCC undertakes.

2. Recommendations

That SMT agrees the proposed Publication Protocol and Processes.

3. Background to the Proposal

Significant work was undertaken in 2018 and 2019 to strengthen and tighten control over how we publish key information. This revised approach was set out in the Publication Protocol and Processes in July 2019. At this stage additional functionality was added to the current website to allow certain pages to be locked down so a two stage sign off is required prior to material being publicly visible. As this new level of

sign off created significant additional steps and restricted the 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.

In 2020 a new transparency page was 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 protocol and process were also revised at this time to ensure responsibilities and ownership was aligned to the new role and responsibilities following a team restructure. At this stage the protocol and processes had been in place for a year and had been successful in providing greater accuracy and transparency. 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 which were fixed.

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. This review showed the website is fully compliant and working well.

The current review has been undertaken as part of our established policy review schedule with a significant number of small changes undertaken. During this review several members of the team have indicated that it has been noted that the protocol has been hard to implement because of a significant number of staff vacancies. This has resulted in late publication and unclear hand over of responsibilities.

This concern was raised and discussed at SMT on 6th December 2022. It was agreed that a full and robust audit would be undertaken and presented to SMT in January. It was also agreed that once this protocol was reviewed and accepted, we would enforce it much more robustly to help achieve a stronger sense of ownership from across the team.

4. Proposal and Associated Benefits

Transparency is at the heart of good governance. Not only is it a statutory requirement but it also underpins public confidence, accountability and the ability of the public and wider stakeholders to engage with the governance of their police and fire and rescue services. It is of fundamental importance.

5. Options Analysis

We could have decided not to agree a publication policy or not to update this version but both options would provide weaker oversight and reassurance that we are publishing information correctly.

6. Consultation and Engagement

All staff with involvement in the publication process have been engaged and the proposed protocol and process has been discussed with the PFCC's Senior Management Team.

7. Strategic Links

Transparency is a statutory requirement and underpins both the Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan.

8. Police operational implications

There are no direct operational implications from this decision.

9. Financial implications

There are no direct financial operations.

10. Legal implications

Much of the information identified in these documents are required to be disclosed by law, so the protocol and processes helps ensure that the Commissioner is complying with their legal requirements.

11. Staffing implications

The publication of information is distributed across a number of roles within the PFCC's office and all relevant team members have been engaged through the review process.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications

Ensuring we publish information in a clear and transparent way that complies with our requirements under accessibility regulations is important, and one way that the Commissioner fulfils their public sector equality duty. This decision will support that transparent, open and accessible process.

13. Risks and Mitigations

There is the risk that this protocol is not followed, and the Commissioner fails to publish the information that is required. This protocol and process is designed to mitigate this risk.

14. Governance Boards

This decision was discussed at the PFCC's SMT on the 6th of December and the decision report was tabled at the PFCC's SMT on the 20th of December.

15. Links to Future Plans

This is part of an ongoing piece of work.

16. Background Papers and Appendices

Appendix 1 – Publication Protocol

Appendix 2 – Publication Processes

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

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Date redaction carried out:

Chief Finance Officer / 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 / Chief Finance Officer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: ROGER HIRST

PFCC/~~Deputy PFCC~~

Date signed: 27 January 2023

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: