

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Meeting to be held on 7th December 2020

WEBCASTING PANEL MEETINGS

Contact for further information: Phil Llewellyn (01254) 585369, HR, Legal and Governance Services, phil.llewellyn@blackburn.gov.uk

Executive Summary

This report outlines arrangements to effectively broadcast meetings of the Panel whilst virtual meetings are still being held.

Recommendation

The Panel is requested to approve the procurement of webcasting services from Auditel for the next five meetings after which time the position be reviewed.

Background and Advice

Since the Covid-19 outbreak it has been necessary to hold virtual meetings of the Panel, which also have to be broadcast live by law.

Panel Members will be aware of the efforts of the Host Authority and Members in engaging in tests and in joining the virtual meetings of the Panel held using MS Teams Live Events. Officers have been looking at how to resolve the issue of the inter council computer configurations and licences whilst also using a product which should be familiar to most. There have been challenges in arranging remote public meetings involving 15 different Council configurations/licences/firewalls/setups at such short notice whilst all Councils were also prioritising other Covid response activities.

Whilst attendance at the Panel meeting in October was good, it did involve some members having to dial in via audio, and certain Councils are still in the process of fully implementing Teams, so following tests, feedback and review, arrangements were made for the meeting on 7th December to be held via 'normal' Teams, which would enable all to join the meeting, even if their authority had not implemented the full Teams solution yet.

Arrangements with the Council's partner, Auditel, were made to broadcast the meeting at a one off cost of £495 and the Home Office funding utilised for this purpose, and if this is considered successful at today's meeting provides the option for continuing this arrangement for several meetings whilst we have to meet remotely, at a cost of £395 per meeting if five meetings are booked in advance.

Given the time spent to date on remote meetings by Officers of the Host Authority and also Members of the Panel in engaging in tests and communication, it is considered a necessary solution to the issues of engagement to date.

As Panel Members will be aware, it may that Hybrid meetings are held in the near future, and again, webcasting would be required for this, so it is necessary to have a process to enable this going forwards.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

N/A

Legal Implications

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations") came into force on 4 April 2020 and apply to local authority meetings (and Police and Crime Panel meetings) which are required to be held before 7 May 2021, and confers statutory powers to hold remote meetings.

The Regulations also make provision for authorities to make changes to their procedure rules to facilitate remote meetings convened under this new power and enable local authorities to deal with the practicalities of holding remote meetings. These include voting, member and public access to documents and remote access of public and press. The Regulations apply to meetings of a local authority, an executive of a local authority, a joint committee of two or more local authorities, and a committee or sub-committee of any of those bodies. Regulation 5 makes it clear that any reference in other legislation that local authority meetings must involve persons being present in the same place can now be met by councillors attending remotely, provided certain conditions are met:

These are that members in remote attendance must at all times be able:

- to hear (and where possible see) and be so heard (and where possible be seen) by the other members in attendance
- to hear (and where possible see) and so be heard (and where possible be seen), by any member of the public entitled to attend the meeting; and
- to be heard (and where possible be seen) by any other member of the public so entitled who are present or accessing the meeting remotely.

It is therefore important that good facilities are in place to holding and webcasting virtual public meetings.

Financial Implications

The Grant Agreement includes a maximum of £53,300 for costs of administering Panels and up to £920 for expenses per member to a maximum of £11,040 (maximum 20 Panel members). This has been confirmed again by the Home Office for 2020/21, and as the Panel usually claims less than half of this amount, there is plenty of budget available for this proposal.

Risk management

If this proposal is not supported there is a risk that Members of the Panel will not be able to carry out their role during the period virtual meetings are held.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Quotation from Auditel.

Contact/Directorate/Tel

Phil Llewellyn, HR, Legal &
Corporate Services
(01254) 585369

Reasons for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate
N/A