

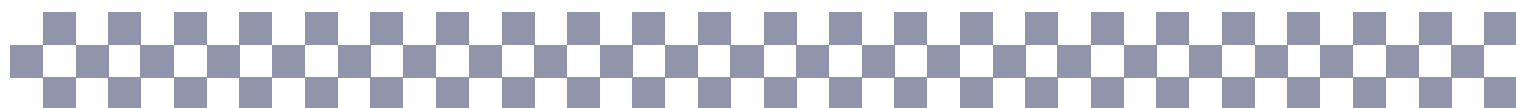
From: Ann Barnes, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner
To: Kent Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Report of correspondence data
Item & Date: Item B2, 9th September, 2014

Introduction

1. This brief outlines the process for dealing with, and amount of correspondence received by the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).

Initial handling and logging

2. Correspondence received by the OPCC (both written and phone calls) are dealt with initially by two members of staff who provide a triage service that seeks to either deal with the correspondent at that stage or signpost the correspondent to the member of staff (either within the OPCC or externally in the Force or outside agencies) who can most effectively deal with the matter.
3. All correspondence is managed as part of a triage service. In the first instance, every piece of correspondence is assessed by content before being allocated. Specific assessments can include determining whether it is a statutory complaint (paragraph 18 - 19) or Freedom of Information (FOI) request (paragraphs 20 - 21) and if it does not fall into either of these categories, it will be logged on the system and assigned a unique reference number under one of the following other categories:
 - Elected officials
 - Government, council & partners
 - Media - this concerns any media coverage, requests for interviews etc.
 - Email (general correspondence from members of the public)
 - Flyers, events and conferences
 - Finance / Invoices
 - Policing partner circulars (Association of Police and Crime Commissioners etc.); and
 - Resident dissatisfaction (a wide variety of policing issues, but in general terms concern the correspondents' contact with the Police, either as a victim of crime, upon arrest or in the community etc.)
4. Depending on the nature of the correspondence the OPCC will either deal with the matter internally, refer it to a relevant area of the force via a central Force Correspondence team, or another organisation (if appropriate). For correspondence referred to the force or externally, the OPCC may continue to have some involvement or oversight of issue depending on the matter.
5. The OPCC aims to acknowledge, log and allocate every piece of correspondence within 48 hours. Officers assigned to deal with correspondence have aims to make a decision as to who will deal with the correspondence e.g. the OPCC, Force or agencies within 5 working days. If being dealt with by the OPCC, we aim to respond within 20 working days but these targets are not fixed because some issues cannot be dealt with inside a prescribed time limit. An example of this might be a force complaint or complex correspondence query which involves seeking information from a variety of different areas within the force. In this instance, members of the public are given an approximate timeframe of when their query may be responded too.
6. People who persistently contact the Office with matters that can be classified as repetitive or vexatious (especially callers) can take up a disproportionate amount of resources and the correspondence and complaints teams often spend a significant amount their time dealing with this group. This can negatively impact on the amount of time they are able to devote to other matters and members of the public. Some of this group exhibit mental health issues that the correspondence and complaints team have to manage



appropriately. All OPCC staff have received training on call handling, and some have limited training in mental health issues. There are robust systems and protocols in place to manage these callers, and arrangements are in place with the Force Control Room to refer significant or serious matters where appropriate.

Correspondence analysis

7. The current system of cataloguing correspondence is performed on an Excel spreadsheet. This effectively acts as an electronic filing system, however as a correspondence database there are several weaknesses that make in-depth analysis of correspondence trends and patterns problematic. This is one of the reasons for the request for a bespoke correspondence database that is currently undergoing beta testing prior to a roll out in the next few months (refer paragraph 20).
8. However, in order to provide a snapshot analysis for this report, the OPCC has individually examined 50% of correspondence between November 2013 and January 2014 in the categories of:
 - Government, Council & Partners
 - Email; and
 - Resident Dissatisfaction.
9. These categories were selected as they provide the best sample of 'typical' correspondence the office might deal with. For reference, the next two highest categories of correspondence are 'Flyers, Event and Conferences' and 'Policing Partner Circulars'. The months of November, December & January (2013/2014) were selected as this period represents the first year introduction of Commissioners as well as a 'normal' period of activity. The volume of 50% was chosen as it was considered large enough to be informative and also achievable given the labour intensive nature of the assessment.

Analysis

10. Overall, a total of 361 individual pieces of correspondence were examined for the period November 2013 to January 2014 in the categories of Government, Council & Partners, Email and Resident Satisfaction. Of this 28% of the correspondences examined were dealt with in their entirety within the OPCC, 69% referred to the Force and 3% to other agencies.
11. The highest proportion of correspondence dealt with within the OPCC fell within those received from the Government, Council & Partners, which is to be expected given the knowledge of procedures and processes within these organisations that should lead to enquiries being directed to appropriate agencies.
12. Within the Resident Dissatisfaction category the majority of correspondences (84%) were referred to the Force, again this is to be expected as most of the correspondences concern the originator's contact with the force in a number of contexts.
13. The final category examined 'email' showed a fairly even split between being dealt with in-house and referral to the Force. Across all three categories very few were referred directly to a third party agency (only 10 out of the 361 examined).
14. In respect of the subject matter of the received correspondence, the top issues were identified for each of the three categories for each month. Within the 'Government, Councils and Partners' category, themes included: HMIC Bulletins, Police Contact Points, speeding issues, funding and invitations to events.
15. Themes amongst the 'Resident Dissatisfaction' category were much more consistent with the Force response to complaints/cases being the top theme in all three months. Officer behaviour also appeared in the top three themes in each month, with speeding and crime reporting amongst others making one-off appearances.
16. In the 'email' category a wide variety of subject matters were recorded, with no single subject appearing more than once in the three months examined. Subjects included police privatisation concerns, Police and Crime Plan refresh, road safety, Neighbourhood Watch and Police Contact Points.

17. Quantitative data for all correspondence received into the OPCC is summarised below:

- Calendar year total for 2014 (to date) – 2905
- Calendar year total for 2013 – 7839
- Calendar year total for 2012 – 1051

Complaints

18. Where correspondence relates to residents' dissatisfaction, or is assessed as a complaint (that meets the statutory definition) the matter is dealt with by the OPCC complaints team. There is also the facility for members of the public to complain about the officers in the OPCC; however this is not a statutory complaints process. It should be noted that the above processes are separate from the Force's complaints system and Professional Standards Department (PSD) which deals with complaints against individual officers up to the Deputy Chief Constable.
19. For 2014 there have been a total of 10 complaints dealt with specifically within the OPCC complaints framework, five against the Chief Constable, three against OPCC staff and two against the PCC.

Freedom of Information

20. The OPCC also receives Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. The FOI Act provides public access to information held by public authorities. The main principle behind Freedom of Information legislation is that people have a right to know about the activities of public authorities, unless there is a good reason for them not to.
21. Below lists the number of FOI requests received by the OPCC for the last three years.
- 2012 - 1
 - 2013 - 90
 - 2014 - 42

New case management system

22. At the present time work is being undertaken in conjunction with the Force's IT Directorate to design and implement a bespoke correspondence database that will streamline processes and improve data accuracy such as analysing trends, provide mechanisms for case management and reports. Beta testing of this database is currently underway. The new system is anticipated to be in place by Christmas 2014.

