

# **NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK PREFERRED POLICE PARTNERSHIP COLLABORATION STRATEGY**

This document outlines the collaborative vision for the Norfolk and Suffolk preferred police partnership. It provides the strategic framework within which to progress the collaborative opportunities and a set of governance principles for the programme. These have been developed recognising the position each of the forces and Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs) hold in respect of preferred police partner collaboration.

## **Development of a Norfolk – Suffolk Collaboration Strategy**

An overarching vision and strategic framework to preferred police partnership collaboration between Norfolk and Suffolk is desirable to enable a shared understanding between the two forces and PCCs of the overall approach. This will help to inform decision making, the delivery of the collaborative programme and provide clear direction for all the resources presently engaged in collaborative activity between Norfolk and Suffolk. The presence of such an agreed approach supports progress, helps relationships to develop and thrive, improves value for money, provides clear strategic direction to those involved in the collaborative journey and assists in the realisation of benefits more fully and swiftly.

## **Vision**

To work jointly to address the financial and service gaps of both forces and Police & Crime Commissioners to deliver more effective and efficient policing services, operational support and business support functions for local people.

The work undertaken against this vision will be known jointly as the Norfolk – Suffolk Change Programme and will be delivered within the following strategic framework:

## **Strategic Framework**

1. To maintain Norfolk and Suffolk as independent police forces capable of delivering flexible, efficient policing services to meet local community needs
2. To add strength to each force individually, to enhance the quality of policing services and to develop the Norfolk and Suffolk policing models in a way that is inclusive of each other
3. To develop and implement a collaborative programme for the delivery of services and to drive out further savings from the collaborative model
4. develop the collaborative programme in such a way that enables the partnership to take advantage of broader efficiency and effectiveness opportunities within the wider policing family, public, private and other sectors
5. To deliver cashable efficiency savings to each force with a view to enabling the respective Police & Crime Commissioners to protect frontline service delivery where possible and contribute to balancing the budget
6. To establish a governance structure for the collaborative programme that enables timely and well informed decision making that enjoys the confidence of both Police & Crime Commissioners and constabularies
7. To review the strategic framework on an annual basis
8. To ensure the partnership is compliant with the requirements of the Strategic Policing Requirement

## **Governance Principles**

1. The maintenance of good governance arrangements to enable both Police & Crime Commissioners to properly discharge their responsibilities in maintaining an efficient and effective police service.
2. The provision of a coherent organisational structure, securing operational independence and enabling Chief Constables to be responsible for efficient and effective policing, management of resources and expenditure within their respective Force area
3. The maintenance of joint PCC/CC meetings to govern preferred police partner collaboration within the boundaries of this strategy.
4. The Strategic Change Department will maintain oversight of the whole change programme and ensure that both the programme and individual projects are managed professionally.
5. Decision making will be informed by recommendations that are underpinned by robust and proportionate analysis of the operational, organisational and financial risk, threats and opportunities that exist.
6. The interests of the wider change programme will be balanced in making decisions on individual issues, resisting 'net donor' arguments that may frustrate collaborative efforts.
7. Governance structures and processes will be developed to achieve timely and sound decision making.

## **Background**

### **Why Collaborate**

There is a clear expectation from the Home Office, The Treasury, HMIC and others for police forces and police & crime commissioners (PCCs) to work collaboratively. This continues to be reflected in Statutory Guidance and inspection frameworks and there is good evidence that collaboration delivers financial and operational benefits to partners.

The Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 places new duties on chief officers and policing bodies to keep collaboration activities under review and to collaborate where it is in the interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of their own and other police force areas. This is a stronger duty than the previous one for police authorities, who were required only to support collaboration by their own forces.

Another key difference from the previous arrangements is that where collaboration would provide the best outcome for another police force or group of police forces, then a chief officer or policing body should pursue it – even if they do not expect to their own force to directly benefit. This is designed to ensure that collaboration takes place wherever it is in the wider public interest.

The benefits of collaboration have previously been detailed in the Home Office Collaboration Toolkit as:

- Improving the ability to tackle serious crime and terrorism through more effective and efficient use of resources, shared expertise and information, and improved resilience
- A method of funding operational service improvements
- Freeing up front-line resource
- Strengthening focus on core operational activities

The ability for forces and PCCs to derive these benefits alone are limited and continue to become increasingly so in the ever tightening fiscal climate.

All public services are rightly expected to make the most of their resources and at a time of challenging financial settlements police forces and PCCs are using collaboration to drive out efficiency and effectiveness across a range of support services in order to invest as much as possible in front line delivery.

### **What should our drivers of collaboration be?**

The Home Office toolkit identifies that the drivers of an organisation towards collaboration are:

- To address financial pressures
- To improve value for money
- To help address operational need
- To enhance operational outcomes
- To improve customer service
- To address capacity and capability shortfalls

Many of these drivers apply to both Norfolk and Suffolk and assist in identifying the case for both forces and PCCs to consider collaborative arrangements with each other and to understand what other opportunities may exist to address these drivers.

### **Why a Norfolk – Suffolk preferred police partnership?**

Collaboration is not straightforward and the experiences of recent years have shown that it is often easier to start by working with one partner police force than to enter collaborative arrangements with many. For that reason a number of preferred police partner relationships have become established across England and Wales, which in addition to our own within the Eastern region include Essex-Kent and Hertfordshire-Bedfordshire.

The preferred police partnership approach recognises that there are more natural synergies for collaboration between some forces than others, usually based upon:

- Similarity in size, organisational structure, policing style and approach, making negotiations' more of a meeting of equal partners;
- Geographical proximity;
- Historically strong bonds which exist between forces and organisations
- A shared desire to progress joint working quickly. Achieving agreement across two organisations is invariably easier than with multiple partners, allowing work streams to progress and for benefits to be realised at a much faster rate than in bigger partnerships.
- Preferred police partnerships can form the basis for subsequent expansion into sub-regional and regional collaboration.
- Preferred police partnerships do not preclude one force in the partnership working with a third force without the preferred police partner being involved. Nor does it preclude either force working with partners in the wider public sector. However, what preferred partnership does imply is that the partners will talk to each other before such decisions are made if these are likely to impact upon existing or planned collaborative arrangements.

Norfolk and Suffolk constabularies and police authorities have been working on this basis for the last three years, building upon working relationships that have existed between them over many years. Whilst there are of course differences, the forces share many similarities, such as size, geography, general policing issues and resourcing levels. They provide a natural pairing to commence collaborative working.

There are already a number of collaborative arrangements that are in place between the two constabularies and authorities / PCCs, for example the joint Protective Services Command, Joint Justice Services Command, Joint Human Resources Department and so on. These have helped to greatly improve working relationships and general understanding between the two constabularies and authorities and are unlocking efficiencies and effectiveness improvements beyond the capabilities of the individual policing areas acting alone.

## **Where is this all leading?**

Collaboration activity is gathering pace across the country and all forces and PCCs are examining their collaborative activity for how this can help deliver the benefits previously outlined. Expectations and scrutiny from inspection bodies around collaborative working are similarly increasing. It can be expected that collaborative working arrangements will increase significantly between forces, PCCs and other partner organisations, both public and private, in the next few years.

It seems unlikely that the preferred police partnership collaborative activity alone will be sufficient to completely address the projected funding gaps likely to be faced by Norfolk and Suffolk over the next few years. Norfolk and Suffolk are not alone in this. Whilst the preferred police partnership arrangements can be expected to substantially contribute to filling these gaps, additional savings will likely be required through either single force actions or through developing broader collaborations with other forces or organisations at the sub-regional, regional or even national level. National experience clearly demonstrates that a 'one-size fits all' approach to collaboration is inappropriate.

The preferred police partnership between Norfolk and Suffolk should, therefore, be developed as a stepping stone arrangement that enables, and certainly not prevents, both forces and the partnership as a whole to achieve broader efficiency and effectiveness arrangements over time by taking advantage of other appropriate opportunities that emerge within the sub-region, region or wider public sector. This should also recognise that development of the preferred police partnership initially will help place the two forces and PCCs in a stronger position to do this and to achieve the further efficiencies that can be expected to result through collaboration with other blue light services or public sector organisations.

It can be anticipated that this approach will result in an end state where each policing area maintains its independent status, but is also involved in a range of collaborative arrangements to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the services offered to local people.

It can be reasonably expected that for Norfolk and Suffolk these would eventually include a variety of single force arrangements, many preferred police partner collaborations and that a number of these will also extend in some areas of business into sub-regional, regional or national collaborations (for example, serious and organised crime). Such collaborations may also include collaborations with other public sector agencies such as the Fire Service, Ambulance or wider public sector.

This long-term vision is entirely consistent with current known political thinking of the three main political parties over the delivery structures for policing. Each gives clear support for collaborative working as being the primary mechanism for achieving performance improvements and efficiencies. There is no general support for enforced merger of forces in the policy proposals of the three main parties.