



# **A guide to being an Independent Member of a Police Authority in England and Wales**

CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

This guide has been produced by the Association of Police Authorities, but has been amended by Cambridgeshire Police Authority to better reflect local information.

## **A guide to being an independent member of a police authority in England and Wales.**

Police authorities recruit independent members every 4 years. The next recruitment round is for new members taking up post on 1 October 2008. Occasionally they need to appoint a new member outside this timescale if, for instance, a current independent member resigns.

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## **1 What is a police authority?**

There are 43 police authorities in England and Wales, each of which oversees the work of its local police force. Police authorities are independent bodies made up of local people. Together with the Home Secretary and chief police officers, they are responsible for the management of policing in England and Wales.

Police authorities make sure the local police force is efficient and effective and seek to improve policing performance and standards. It is their job to make sure local people have a say in how they are policed and to hold the chief police officer to account for the services delivered. Police authorities also set the force budget and decide how much money to raise towards the cost of policing through the local council tax.

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## **2 What is an Independent Member?**

Police authorities have two types of member:

- Local councillors - chosen by local councils or joint committees of local councils;
  - Independent members - local people who are not councillors. Independent members are chosen through a process involving a local Selection Panel on which also sits a Home Office representative and an Independent Assessor, whose eligibility is vetted by the Home Office. Authorities used to have a third category, being magistrate members, but the law changed on this constitution in 2008, such that of the independent members, one must specifically be a magistrate, but other magistrates are eligible to apply as “local people” for general independent member vacancies. (See section 16 for more information about the selection process.)
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## **3 Why be a police authority member?**

As a police authority member you can play a key part in improving police performance and raising the standards of policing in your area. And you can help ensure that people from all local communities receive fair and non-discriminatory police services.

It is an important and challenging role which offers you the chance to have a crucial input into the strategic direction of your local police force. Not only will you develop strong links with your local communities you will also gain a critical insight into policing both locally and nationally.

This is your opportunity to help reduce crime and the fear of crime in your area and ensure that local people get the policing they expect and deserve.

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## **4 How many members do police authorities have?**

Most police authorities in England and Wales have 17 members, made up of:

- 9 councillors
- 8 independent members one of whom must be a magistrate

However, some authorities have a greater number of members. For example, Devon & Cornwall, Thames Valley, Greater Manchester, Dyfed-Powys and South Wales have 19 members, made up of:

- 10 councillors
- 9 independent members one of whom must be a magistrate

Whereas the Metropolitan Police Authority has 23 members, made up of:

- 12 Greater London Assembly members
  - 11 independent members one of whom must be a magistrate
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## **5 What do police authorities do?**

The police authority's job is to:

- Maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of the local police force;
- Make sure that the local police force keeps improving its service and delivers the highest standards of policing to local people;
- Consult local people and ensure their views are reflected in the nature and style

- of local policing, and
- Work in partnership with others - such as the chief police officer and local authorities - to reduce crime and disorder and fear of crime.

This involves:

- Engaging with local people to find out what they want from their local police force;
- Producing a rolling 3 year plan for policing;
- Setting local policing priorities and challenging targets to improve performance after consultation with local communities and the chief police officer;
- Agreeing the police budget and deciding how much council tax local people should pay towards local policing;
- Publishing an rolling 3 year plan which tells local people what they can expect from their police service in the year ahead, and obviously beyond;
- Reporting back to local communities at the end of the year on the extent to which the plan has been met;
- Appointing the chief police officer and other senior police staff
- monitoring the process and outcomes of complaints made against police officers and other staff;
- Engaging in constructive partnerships with the police force, local authorities, crime and disorder reduction partnerships, local criminal justice agencies and other key organisations to secure delivery of the right police service for the area, and

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## **6 What is the Association of Police Authorities?**

All police authorities are members of the Association of Police Authorities (APA), the national body which represents police authority interests. The APA seeks to influence the policing agenda nationally as well as supporting police authorities locally in securing an efficient and effective police service.

The APA provides training days, conferences and events and provides information and updates about what is happening at national level in policing.

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## **7 How do police authorities work?**

Police authorities meet regularly (between 4 and 12 times each year) to take key decisions affecting local policing and question the chief officer and other senior police staff about all aspects of the force and its performance. These meetings are usually held in public.

Police authorities also carry out a lot of their work in committees, panels, project boards and other working groups set up to focus on particular aspects of authority business. These might include for example:

- Performance Management
- Community Consultation and Engagement
- Complaints
- Finance and Audit
- Human Resources and Training
- Planning
- Property and Estates Management
- Standards
- Animal Welfare

All police authorities have a Chief Executive and a Treasurer and a small number of staff who provide administrative, personnel, legal, and policy support.

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## **8 What will I be expected to do?**

As a police authority member, you must represent the views of people who live in, work in, or visit the police authority area. You will need to build partnerships between the police force and local communities through consulting a wide and diverse range of people about policing in your area. You should bring your own judgement to bear on police authority business and, over time, build up the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to the work of a police authority.

You will be expected to attend all meetings of the police authority and participate effectively as a member of any committee, panel or other forum which you are asked to join. In addition, you may develop links to a particular unit in the force or become a lead member within the authority on a specific issue, such as personnel, community relations or IT matters. You may also be asked to represent the authority on other bodies, such as the local crime and disorder reduction partnership. You will also be expected to attend regular meetings and other events to consult local people about policing.

You will need to be prepared to read papers, reports and background information in advance of meetings and other events. You will also need to keep up-to-date with national and local policing issues and maintain a good working knowledge of force policies and practices.

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## **9 Are there any rules about conduct or standards?**

At all times, police authority members must maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics. On joining the authority, you will be required to sign up to a code of conduct committing yourself to these standards. For example,

When carrying out police authority work you must not:

- Bring the authority into disrepute, or
- Use your position improperly to advantage yourself, your family or friends, or
- Disclose confidential information.

If appointed, you will also be required to give written details of any personal or financial interests in a register which is open to the public.

If you are found to be in breach of the Code you may be suspended or removed from the authority.

To be a police authority member, you must also be committed to:

- Treating everyone with respect;
- Upholding human rights;
- Promoting equality of opportunity;
- Promoting good race relations; and
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination.

All police authority members must ensure that policing services are provided fairly across the police area and in a way which is sensitive and responsive to diverse needs.

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## **10 How much time is involved?**

On average, you will need to be able to commit about 8 hours each week to police authority business. Most work will be on weekdays, but evening and weekend commitments are also likely.

Under the law, you are entitled to reasonable time off work to carry out your local police authority duties.

**Please see next page for a sample Diary of an Independent Member**

Monday	4 February	Monday	11 February
Tuesday	5 February	Tuesday	12 February
Wednesday	6 February	Wednesday	13 February
Thursday	7 February	Thursday	14 February
Friday	8 February	Friday	15 February
Saturday	9 February	Saturday	16 February
Sunday	10 February	Sunday	17 February
Monday	18 February	Monday	25 February
Tuesday	19 February	Tuesday	26 February
Wednesday	20 February	Wednesday	27 February
Thursday	21 February	Thursday	28 February
Friday	22 February	Friday	1 March
Saturday	23 February	Saturday	2 March
Sunday	24 February	Sunday	3 March

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11 Will I receive any payment?

### **11 Will I receive any payment?**

In Cambridgeshire, police authority members receive a basic annual allowance. Those members who take on extra responsibilities, such as Chairman of the police authority or of a Committee, receive a special responsibility allowance which reflects their enhanced roles.

You will also be able to claim for the costs of travel or other expenses involved in carrying out police authority work. If you have young children or care for a dependant, the police authority will also help towards the cost of paying someone (other than a family member) to look after them during the time that you spend on police authority business.

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### **12 How long will I be a member of the authority?**

You will normally be appointed for four years. However, in some cases, the authority may appoint you for a shorter period with the approval of the Home Secretary.

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### **13 What qualities do I need?**

As well as being of good character, you need to:

- possess good communication skills
  - be willing to seek out and listen to the views of all local communities on policing issues and to feed these back into the work of the authority
  - possess skills and experiences which sustain and broaden the expertise available to the authority, for example in management, business, finance, community safety and race relations
  - be committed to playing an active part in your local community
  - be able to rigorously scrutinise, challenge and monitor all aspects of force performance
  - be able to challenge accepted views in a constructive way
  - understand the pressures and challenges which face the police themselves
  - be committed to providing a fair and non-discriminatory police service for all sections of local communities
  - have good time-management skills
  - be an effective team player
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### **14 Can anyone be an independent member?**

Police authorities welcome applications from all groups within the communities they serve. Given the vital work that police authorities do, it is essential that their membership fully reflects the diversity of the local communities and some groups (women, young people, those with disabilities and ethnic minorities) are currently under-represented. That is why all police authorities are strongly committed to a policy of equal opportunities.

## **Age**

You must be at least 18 years old.

## **Local Base**

You must live or work in the police authority area. If you have more than one job or more than one home, then your main residence or place of work must be in the police authority area. If you move house or jobs and no longer live or work in the police area, you will no longer be able to serve on the Authority.

## **Other rules**

There are some strict rules about who can be an independent member. For example, you cannot be an independent member if:

- you work for a police authority
- you are a member, officer or employee of a council (except for teachers or lecturers) which appoints councillor members to any police authority
- you are a police officer
- you have been sentenced to three or more months imprisonment in the last five years
- you are an undischarged bankrupt

Full details of the reasons which could disqualify you from being a member of a police authority are set out in section 19.

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## **15 Applications**

When wishing to recruit new independent members, police authorities will advertise the posts in a number of ways, such as local papers, or their website.

All applications are considered by an independent Selection Panel. The Panel is made up of five people:

- three existing members of the police authority
- a person appointed by the Home Secretary
- a third person acting as an Independent Assessor, whose eligibility to participate is approved by the Home Office

The Selection Panel consider all applicants and first undertake a “paper sift” to compare applicants against objective criteria. Those who obviously fail to meet those criteria are not progressed to interview stage. Those who obviously do are invited to a short first interview by the Panel, where questions are asked of their experience, views and motivation to be a member. All interviewed candidates are compared against objective criteria and the fairness and impartiality of the process is scrutinised by the Home Secretary appointee and the Independent Assessor.

The Panel produces a shorter list of the best candidates at first interview and invites them to a deeper second interview. The objective at second interview is to produce a list of top quality candidates (ideally twice the number of people needed, including two magistrate members for the one specific magistrate position, if a magistrate is being recruited at that time) which are then recommended for consideration by the full Authority. Clearly it is the police authority which makes the final selection of independent members.

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## **16 Further Information**

If you have any questions or would like further information please contact the Cambridgeshire Police Authority Chief Executive by calling 0845 345 4335, by emailing [police.authority@cambs.pnn.police.uk](mailto:police.authority@cambs.pnn.police.uk) or by writing to:

Independent Members, Cambridgeshire Police Authority, Cambridgeshire Constabulary Headquarters, Hinchingsbrooke Park, Huntingdon, PE29 6NP

Recruitment information including application forms are available on Cambridgeshire Police Authority's website at [www.cambs-pa.gov.uk/vacancies](http://www.cambs-pa.gov.uk/vacancies),

The APA website (see 6 above) also has information at [www.apa.police.uk](http://www.apa.police.uk)

Please note that Cambridgeshire's closing date for 2008 applicants is 3 June 2008.

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## **17 Disqualifications**

This section sets out the principal circumstances in which a person would be disqualified from appointment as an independent member of a police authority.

### **1.**

(i) Subject to sub-paragraphs (ii) and (iv) of this paragraph, a person shall be disqualified from being appointed as or being a member of a police authority if:

(a) he holds any paid office or employment, appointments to which are or may be made or confirmed by the police authority or any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or by a joint committee on which the authority are represented, or by any person holding any such office or employment.

(b) a bankruptcy order has been made against him or his estate has been sequestrated or he had made a composition or arrangement with, or granted a trust deed for, his creditors;

(c) he is subject to a disqualification order under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986, or to an order made under Section 429(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under county court administration order); or

(d) he has within five years before the date of his appointment or since his appointment been convicted in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man of an offence, and has had passed on him a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months.

(ii) A paid employee of a police authority who is employed under the direction of a joint board, joint authority or joint committee on which the authority is represented and any member of which is appointed on the nomination of some other police authority shall be disqualified from being appointed as or being a member of that other police authority.

(iii) Where a person is disqualified under sub-paragraph (i)(b) of this paragraph by reason that a bankruptcy order has been made against him or his estate has been sequestrated, the disqualification shall cease:

(a) on his obtaining a discharge, unless the bankruptcy order is previously annulled or the sequestration of his estate is recalled or reduced; and

(b) if the bankruptcy is annulled or the sequestration of his estate is recalled or reduced, on the date of that event.

(iv) Where a person is disqualified under sub-paragraph (i)(b) of this paragraph by reason of his having made a composition of arrangement with, or granted a trust deed for, his creditors and he pays his debts in full, the disqualification shall cease on the date on which the payment is completed, and in any other case it shall cease at the end of the period of five years beginning with the date on which the terms of the deed of composition or arrangements or trust deed are fulfilled.

(v) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (i)(d) of this paragraph, the date of a conviction shall be taken to be the ordinary date on which the period allowed for making an appeal or application expires or, if an appeal or application is made, the date on which the appeal or application is finally disposed of or abandoned or fails by reason of its non-prosecution.

## 2.

(i) Without prejudice to paragraphs 1 and 2 above, a person shall be disqualified for being appointed as a member of a police authority if:

(a) he has not yet attained the age of twenty-one years; or

(b) neither his principal or only place of work, nor his principal or only place of residence, has been in the area of the authority during the whole of the period of twelve months ending with the day of appointment.

(ii) Without prejudice to paragraphs 1 and 2 above, a person shall be disqualified for being a member so appointed if, at any time, neither his principal or only place of work, nor his principal or only place of residence, is within that area.

## 3.

(i) Without prejudice to paragraphs 1 and 2 above, a person shall be disqualified from being appointed as a member of a police authority and for being a member so appointed, if he is:

(a) a member of the council for a county, district or London borough which is wholly or partly within the area of the police authority;

(b) a member of the selection panel for the police authority area;

(c) a member of a police force;

(d) an officer or employee of a police authority; or

(e) an officer or employee of a relevant council.

(ii) A person shall not be regarded for the purposes of sub-paragraph (i)(f) of this paragraph as an employee of a relevant council by reason of his holding:

(a) the post of head teacher or principal of a school, college or other educational institution or establishment which is maintained or assisted by a local education authority; or

(b) any other post as a teacher or lecturer in any such school, college institution or establishment.

If you have any doubts about your eligibility, the Cambridgeshire Police Authority Chief Executive will be pleased to provide advice. See section 16 for contact details.