

Cambridgeshire Police Authority Guidance Conduct during the Local and European Parliamentary Elections 2009

The Police Authority is a politically impartial body. Accordingly, we abide by the long-standing convention (known as “purdah”) that during the four weeks before local elections, or from the time a General Election is called, we do not make major policy pronouncements or engage in publicity that might be deemed politically sensitive. The aim is to ensure that Cambridgeshire Police Authority is not drawn into areas of political controversy during the election period.

This year both Local and European Parliamentary Elections take place on **4 June 2009**. This means the “purdah” period will run from **4 May 2009**. The local elections have the potential to impact on police authority membership. Some police authority members will be directly involved in such elections.

It is therefore crucial that everyone abides by the guidance below. If in doubt, please always check with the Policy & Research Manager or the Chief Executive.

Conduct of Staff & Members

As members and officers of the Police Authority, we are required to conduct Police Authority business in a politically impartial way at all times in our work capacity. It is important that everyone exercises extra care and acts with scrupulous impartiality during the election period. Staff are reminded that all posts within the Cambridgeshire Police Authority Executive Team are politically restricted. Staff should therefore take care to ensure that any views shared are in context, appropriate, and will not bring the Police Authority into public disrepute by being seen to support or denigrate one party or another. This applies to independent members and staff during the purdah period.

Councillor members will come under separate guidance issued by their parent Councils. Councillor members are therefore also urged to check guidance issued by their respective authorities.

Circulars/Guidance etc.

Any circulars, guidance or other correspondence to the Police Authority which may deal with a controversial or politically sensitive issue, should be cleared in draft with the Chief Executive or the Policy & Research Manager.

Media

There is no intention that the Police Authority should not be able to comment during this period on issues of concern – just that particular care be taken to ensure that we are not seen to be favouring one or other political party.

Any proposals to issue press releases or media statements should be discussed with the Media & Communications Officer or Chief Executive. The Media & Communications Officer and/ or Chief Executive will determine the need for appropriate clearance with the Chairman and other members as necessary.

No comment about **anything regarding policing** should be provided to the press or public without first obtaining explicit clearance from the Media & Communications Officer and/ or the Chief Executive. If in any doubt about anything concerning the media or public engagement activities please refer to the Media & Communications Officer and/ or Chief Executive.

This guidance applies to all members of the Police Authority.

Requests for information from Executive/Police Authority Members

Normal policy work should continue but staff should take particular care in dealing with policy development work or requests for information. Members will be representing the Police Authority at committee meetings during this period (Scrutiny & Audit/ Professional Standards) so care needs to be taken in briefing members in respect of such meetings.

Any requests from members for information/publications etc which are already in the public domain can be dealt with normally. Any requests/enquiries which involve providing new or additional information or development of a new/revised policy position should be cleared with the Policy & Manager and/ or the Chief Executive.

Particular care should be taken over provision of information, past briefing material etc on crime statistics, police numbers/pay, PCSOs or similarly politically sensitive issues.

Enquiries/Requests for Information from Political Parties

All such enquiries should be referred to the Chief Executive. No comment or other information (even factual information) should be provided to any political party without first obtaining clearance from the Chief Executive.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Anna Turner
Media & Communications Officer
6th May 2009