

The Role of the

POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

- Police and Crime Commissioners are responsible for holding police forces and their Chief Constables to account. The role was created as part of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and are a replacement of Police Authorities which were deemed to be unrepresentative and lack clear constituted power.
- PCCs control their local force's police fund which is granted to each force by the Home Office and has a say on how and where it is distributed throughout the different areas of their police forces such as cyber crime and neighbourhood policing.
- PCCs are elected by the public in their policing area every five years, providing a suitable accountability mechanism in the form of varying re-election prospects.

Sources

- Wells, H. (2015) Grey areas and fine lines: negotiating operational independence in the era of the police and crime commissioner. *Safer Communities*, 14(4) 193-203.
- Brian, T. (2014) Police and crime commissioners: the first twelve months. *Safer Communities*, 13(1) 40-51.



Possible Reforms

- Grant Police and Crime Panels increased power in scrutinizing the PCCs appointments and sackings of Chief Constables
- The government should give clarity regarding the wording of the legislation that defines the role of the PCC, making clear what their powers are and what the powers of crime panels are in order to prevent any further abuse of power.
- A government campaign of information about what PCCs do could increase public awareness and exposure of their work. This would strengthen the primary check on their power which is public confidence.

Notable Criticisms

- Police and Crime Panels designed to hold PCCs to account are believed by some to lack the powers necessary to wield notable influence which weakens the checks and balances that hold the PCC to account.
- Election turnout in the 2012 PCC elections was only 15%, leading to questions regarding the scope of public awareness that is required for the public to hold their PCC account.
- Their ability to suspend and fire Chief Constables has proved controversial on numerous occasions. Notably in 2013 when Lincolnshire PCC Alan Hadwick's sacking of the then temporary Chief Constable Neil Rhodes over an allegation against Rhodes was overturned by a judicial review, prompting Hadwick to apologise to Rhodes.
- Some PCCs set higher budgets than the police authorities that they replaced. Some believe that this represents a contradiction to the government claim PCCs are better value for money than police authorities