

# Police Authority Guidelines on working with Sussex MPs

Sussex Police Authority is keen to encourage joint working with Sussex Members of Parliament, where this is appropriate. In order to facilitate this, whilst at the same time ensuring the legitimate use of Authority officer time and facilities, these guidelines have been developed with the Chairman and Chief Executive.

## **General**

1. Any work involving the MPs should be related to legitimate Authority business, and should not be generated simply at the request of an MP.

## **Invitations and Publicity**

2. The Authority must take great care in issuing publicity which includes the local MPs as they are persons identified with a political party and therefore subject to the provisions of Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 and Section 27 of the Local Government Act 1988. Times when it will be appropriate to invite MPs to Authority events and to include the MPs in Authority publicity will include:

- Events organised by the Authority to which MPs are formally invited, such as Authority meetings, ministerial visits, official opening of premises, launches of specific projects, etc.
- Events organised by recipients of JIF grants or other activities funded or supported by the Authority to which they invite the MPs.
- Events organised by partners and community organisations to which both the Authority and MPs are invited.
- Local campaigns and issues where the Authority had formally asked one or more MPs to be involved in lobbying on the Authority's behalf; in all such cases, the reason for MP involvement should be clearly established. Formal requests to MPs can take a number of forms, which should be documented, e.g. Council, Cabinet or Committee motions or resolutions; MPs briefings; Requests in writing, only from the Chief Executive.
- Local campaigns and issues where MPs have approached or put a proposal to the Authority, to which the Authority is responding.

3. MPs may be invited to launches of Authority initiatives or functions where they have a clear personal, geographical or interest-based link with the initiative, and it would be normal to invite the MP.

4. Requests from MPs to Authority members or officers or services to participate in campaigns initiated by an MP should be handled with great care and must be relevant to Sussex and to the Authority. In all cases they should be referred to the Chief Executive and the Press and Public Relations Officer.

5. Separate guidance will be offered during election purdah periods, which will supersede this guidance.

## **Correspondence and Briefings**

6. Except where otherwise agreed by the Chief Executive, all correspondence between MPs and the Authority will be through the Chief Executive.

7. The Chief Executive may offer briefing meetings to MPs (separately and together) on a regular basis. Members and officers may request that specific items are added to the agenda.

8. Conversely, MPs can request briefings on specific items at these meetings, in which case the Chief Executive will approach the appropriate member or officer to arrange for the briefing to be provided to the meeting, either orally or in writing. MPs may only request information or briefings in confidence in the following circumstances:

- on a matter where the information itself is confidential or exempt under the provision of the Access to Information, Data Protection or Freedom of Information legislation.
- Where the advice requested is on a matter personal to the MP

10. MPs do not have a right of access to information about individuals or clients, and the Data Protection Act 1998 specifically prevents information about living individuals from being disclosed to anybody unless the subject has been told that the information will be used for that purpose or has consented to the disclosure. MPs who can show that they have been asked by a constituency resident to represent them on a particular matter have a right to expect reasonable access to information in order to represent that constituent effectively. With regard to personal information, this will normally be limited to information about that individual and may not extend to information about other associated individuals, for example for members of the family, household or neighbours.

11. Requests for information or briefings from Sussex MPs that do not involve confidential information or personal advice will be copied to the Chairman, Vice-chairman and if appropriate, the relevant lead member and committee chairman; and where MPs request oral briefings the Chief Executive will inform the same of the content of the briefing.

12. Authority members or officers will not provide briefings to MPs on operational policing matters. Such enquiries must be directed to the Chief Constable.

### **Facilities**

13. MPs may not make use of Authority officer time or Authority facilities in their publicity or constituency work.