



Cookstown

***District Policing
Partnership***

Local people shaping local policing

**Policy on
Submission & Answering of
Questions at Meetings in Public Session**

Adopted May 2003

Amended & Adopted 24 May 2004

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The purpose of this paper is to act as a guide on the areas surrounding the submission of questions by members of the public to be answered by the District Commander of Cookstown at meetings in public meetings of the District Policing Partnership.

This paper will be used by the DPP Manager, Members of Cookstown DPP, the District Commander and forwarded to members of the public on request. A digest on the submission of questions has been included on the form which can be used by the public when submitting a question to be answered.

1. Context

1.1 Paragraphs 4.2, 4.7, 4.13, 4.14 and 4.15 of the District Policing Partnerships Code of Practice on the Functions & Responsibilities set the context for the submission of questions to the DPP by the public to be considered for a response at a meeting in public by the District Commander.

1.2 **Paragraph 4.2** states “The DPP should also ask the police questions that may have been forwarded to them by members of the public”.

1.3 **Paragraph 4.7** states, “At least eight working days before the meeting of the DPP the police District Commander should be informed of any issues which have been raised in written questions where the police would be expected to provide an answer”.

1.4 **Paragraph 4.13** states “a written question will be accepted from any person living or working in the district or any person directly affected by the policing of the district. If a person wishes to have their question acknowledged, they need to include their name and address”.

1.5 **Paragraph 4.14** states “Any member of the public may choose to ask a member of the DPP to raise an issue or ask a question on their behalf. If the member of the DPP considers that the information being sought falls within the

categories listed in 4.15, they should seek guidance from the Chairman of the DPP” (see Appendix 1).

1.6 **Paragraph 4.15** details the instances in which an answer may not be provided to a question submitted by the public or asked of the District Commander from a Member of the DPP (see appendix 1).

1.7 It is therefore in this context which the following procedures have been developed by Cookstown District Policing Partnership for dealing with the submission and answering of questions at meetings in public.

2. Submission of Questions

2.1 On consulting the District Policing Partnership Code of Practice and Standing Orders the following paragraphs have been adopted.

2.2 Any one who resides or works in Cookstown District, or any person directly affected by the policing of the district may submit a question to the DPP Manager to be considered at the nearest available public meeting.

2.3 Question(s) should be submitted in writing to the DPP Manager 10 calendar days before the public meeting is due to take place. There is a text phone facility available through Cookstown District Council for those who may have difficulty in submitting a question in writing (Tel: 028 8676 5827). Should the question(s) arrive with the DPP Manager outside the 10 calendar day deadline, its inclusion at the public meeting will be at the discretion of the DPP and the District Commander. See paragraph 3.2.

2.4 If a question(s) arrives outside the deadline and it is not considered for inclusion at the meeting in public it will automatically be included on the list of questions for answering by the District Commander at the next available public meeting. In this instance the questioner(s) will be notified in writing stating this. In this case the questioner(s) will have the option of withdrawing the question at any time, and seek another avenue for receiving an answer to the question, see paragraph 6.1.

2.5 For a question to receive a written response to a question submitted for oral answer at a meeting in public the questioner(s) must supply the DPP Manager with his/ her name and address to which an answer may be forwarded. A written response will be forwarded within 5 working days of the meeting taking place.

2.6 If a question is on the list of questions to be answered by the District Commander at a meeting in public and time runs out for it to receive an oral

answer the questioner will automatically receive a written response within 5 working days of the meeting taking place. This is subject to paragraph 2.5 above.

2.7 A person may only submit two questions at any one public meeting, unless otherwise determined by the DPP.

2.8 On the submission of a question(s) from a member of the public only the question(s) will be forwarded to the District Commander for his consideration at the meeting in public. At no time will questions be attributed to a member of the public, unless stated otherwise.

3. Cookstown DPP & Cookstown District Command Unit

3.1 The DPP Manager will forward all questions received by the deadline to the District Commander no later than eight working days before the public meeting is due to take place.

3.2 In the event of a question(s) being received by the DPP outside the deadline for submission, the DPP Manager with authority from DPP Chairman/ or Vice-Chairman will liaise with the District Commander on the possibility of its inclusion in the batch of questions being considered for oral answer. If the question(s) are unable to be included then they will be dealt with in the manner set out in Paragraph 2.4.

3.3 In order to obtain the running order of questions being addressed at any meeting in public the DPP Manager shall obtain, when possible, a copy of the same from the District Commander in which questions will be dealt, 24 hours before the meeting is due to take place. In obtaining a copy of the questions being addressed and their running order, copies will be made for Members of the DPP and the attending public so they may follow the District Commander when answering the questions.

4. Answering of Questions

4.1 There may be circumstances in which the District Commander may decline to answer a question(s) forwarded by the DPP Manager. Circumstances in which this may occur are when the question(s) may fall under one of the categories in paragraph 4.15 of the District Policing Partnerships Code of Practice. If this is the case the District Commander should inform the DPP Manager, who will subsequently inform the questioner(s), if personal contact details were forwarded. In this instance the DPP Manager will encourage the questioner(s) to rephrase the question and resubmit it for answer at a future

meeting in public. The DPP Manager will also inform the questioner(s) of the procedure for asking a question at a public meeting (see paragraph 5.1).

4.2 If the questioner(s) rephrases and resubmits the question(s) it will be added to the list of questions to be considered for answer at the next available meeting in public.

4.3 On reaching the agenda item for the answering of questions submitted by the public the Chairman will request the District Commander to work through the list of questions which has been supplied to the DPP Manager in advance of the meeting taking place (see paragraph 3.3).

4.4 There may be instances in which the District Commander may wish to only provide a written response to a question submitted through the DPP. In this instance the question will still be on the list of questions submitted prior to the meeting taking place. But on reaching this question on the list the District Commander will note the fact that a written answer will be forwarded to the questioner through the DPP Manager, and briefly state why it is not being dealt with orally.

5. Questions submitted beginning & during a meeting

5.1 Members of the public attending the meeting may ask a question of the District Commander by forwarding it to the DPP Manager or other nominated person, complete with a name and address.

5.2 A member of the public may also be allowed to ask the District Commander an oral question on the policing of the district at the discretion of the Chairman. In this instance, questions should be asked through the Chairman and be relevant to the policing of the district.

5.3 Questions at 5.1 and 5.2 will be dealt with when DPP Members questions, and those previously submitted by the public have been received.

5.4 At the meeting the District Commander may not have all the information to answer a question described at 5.1 and 5.2 on the night of the meeting. In this instance a written response will be forwarded to the questioner within 10 working days of the meeting takes place, subject to a name and address being supplied.

5.5 Also see Section 16 of Cookstown District Policing Partnership Standing Orders.

6. Questioning of the District Commander by DPP Members

6.1 As set out in 4.14 in the District Policing Partnerships Code of Practice members of the public may approach a DPP Member to ask a question on their behalf. Once the District Commander has answered the questions on the list (see paragraph 4.3) the Chairman will then move to taking questions from Members of the DPP.

6.2 The Chairman may rule on such questions if they fall within the categories outlined in 4.15 of the District Policing Partnerships Code of Practice (**see appendix 1**)

Appendix 1

Section 4.15 states that there may be circumstances in which information cannot be provided to a question. This may occur if:

1. it is in the interests of national security
2. it would endanger the security of one or more individuals
3. it relates to an individual and is of a sensitive personal nature
4. it involves information that the police are holding in confidence from another agency
5. it would, or would be likely to, prejudice proceedings which have been commenced in a court of law
6. it would, or would be likely to, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders

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