



**HEDDLU
GOGLEDD CYMRU
NORTH WALES
POLICE**

PRE ELECTION PERIOD POLICY

POLICY

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1. WHY IS THIS POLICY REQUIRED?

The period immediately before an election or referendum is known as the 'formal pre-election period' and has been referred to in the past as 'purdah'. During the formal pre-election period, individuals within an organisation and the organisation itself must have no influence on the outcome of an election, or act in anyway which may bring the organisation into disrepute.

The political impartiality of North Wales Police (NWP) underpins the legitimacy of the Force to enforce the law and enhance the safety of all those within the Force area. The North Wales public need to be confident that officers and staff will serve them loyally and impartially. The pre-election period leading up to any election (local, by-election, general, Welsh Government, Police and Crime Commissioner or European) is particularly sensitive and, given the dominance of policing issues during any election, officers and staff should carefully consider their actions and avoid acting in any way which might favour one political group or candidate over another.

This policy will

- 1.1 Provide officers and staff of North Wales Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) with information as to how they should conduct themselves during the pre-election period.
- 1.2 Provide expectations during the pre-election period to ensure the Forces' political impartiality is not disputed.
- 1.3 Provide additional information and detail to aid officers and staff during the pre-election period of the Police and Crime Commissioners elections which are specifically focused on policing issues.

2. WHO SHOULD USE THIS POLICY?

This policy should be used by all police officers, police staff, contracted staff and volunteers and staff of the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (with the exception of the PCC and DPCC).

The Chief Constable and OPCC will publicise this policy at appropriate times to officers and staff respectively and the policy will be strictly applied during the pre-election period. Staff should also be mindful that the period running up to the pre-election period is also politically sensitive.

3. WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER WHEN USING THIS POLICY?

Some useful supplementary documents include

- [House of Commons, Library Standard Note 5262: the pre-election period](#)
- [ACPO Guidelines for interaction with Police & Crime Commissioner candidates.](#)
- APACE Election Guidance for OPCC staff.
- [Politically Restricted Posts Policy](#)

4. THE PROCESS

4.1 Pre-Election Period Principles

The following principles summarise the intentions and offer guidance for both the Force and OPCC during pre-election periods:

- The Force will continue to conduct its normal business.
- Candidates, prospective candidates and parties must be treated impartially. In the event that there are candidates who currently hold office, care should be taken to ensure all candidates, including those standing for re-election, are treated equally and that the Force and the OPCC do not unwittingly support any such candidates in their election campaigns.
- Officers and staff must avoid any action which is or might reasonably be perceived as being supportive of any party, candidate or opinion. This includes using personal social media accounts both on and off duty to show support/opposition. Please refer to the Politically Restricted Posts Policy for periods outside the Pre-Election Period.
- Officers and staff must avoid putting themselves in a position or situation which could be used by a party candidate in support of their campaign.
- Officers and staff should not offer political opinions to the public or candidates, nor make statements that do not reflect this policy.
- Requests by candidates or other politicians to visit any Force or OPCC premises or to observe officers and staff at work must be referred to an NPCC Officer and the OPCC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for a decision. Requests may be permitted for fact finding reasons only but not for any intention to generate publicity, campaigning or for party political reasons. All candidates should be provided with equal access; therefore consideration should be given to briefing all candidates simultaneously.
- National political figures may make requests for media visits. Such requests should be referred to the Force's Head of Corporate Communications and OPCC's CEO in order to determine if and how such visits should be accommodated in an open and transparent way.
- Officers and staff must not be photographed or filmed with candidates, prospective candidates, parties or individuals displaying campaign material both on and off duty. Officers and staff should clearly inform candidates upon arrival at official Force or OPCC visits that photographs with candidates are prohibited. It should be explained that this is because publication of such material could be seen as endorsement of the candidate or party by the employee, especially if the material is of a senior ranking officer or member of staff.
- The Force and OPCC will make it clear to all parties and candidates/prospective candidates that permission to use any pre-existing photographs, or publicity involving officers or staff in their campaign is not permitted.
- The Force and OPCC must not publish material that refers to or could, in any way, be perceived as support for a candidate or party. This includes web-based, posters or other publicity material, official documentation or any other such material.
- Any person who chooses to stand as a candidate should not use their position or connection to the Force or OPCC to seek advantage over other candidates. Information provided to candidates or prospective candidates will be available on the OPCC's website up to 3 months prior to an election to ensure that it is available to all.

- Announcements made by the Force should be made with due consideration to ensure that they do not stand on any matters relevant to the elections. This should however be carefully balanced against any implications whereby delaying the announcement could itself influence the political outcome or impede operational effectiveness.

4.2 Pre-Election Period Principles for Police and Crime Commissioner Elections

The following principles add additional information for officers and staff in the period preceding the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner

- Correspondence from all candidates should receive equal treatment.
- Extraordinary meetings with candidates and other politicians such as MPs or MS' should be avoided unless they are regular diarised meetings such as partnership boards.
- Neither the Force or OPCC should assist any candidate in publishing publicity material. This includes printing, postage and translating facilities.
- Political parties and candidates can legitimately seek to influence electorates and therefore may issue their own press releases or public information. It should be clear however, that these statements represent the views of the candidate or political party and not that of the Force
- Political campaign material must not appear in, on or within Force or OPCC property, websites, internal intranets or social media platforms.
- Where contact is made with the public through minutes of meetings, communications with the press or otherwise, statements must not be seen as implying support for a particular party or candidate and reports on politically challenging matters should be avoided.
- Officers and staff must not persuade or dissuade a person from giving their vote, whether as an elector or as a representative acting as a proxy vote.
- Both officers and staff must not sign nomination papers in support of PCC candidates.

4.3 Interaction with Candidates

- When interacting with candidates, there is no obligation on the Force or OPCC to treat a political candidate - differently than to a member of the public. Whilst the Force and OPCC should always respond to reasonable requests from political candidates, there is no duty or expectation to interact with candidates in the way the Force or OPCC would with elected representatives.
- Representatives of the Force and/or OPCC may have regular contact with local elected representatives, keeping them informed of matters of interest in their areas. During the pre-election period, care should be taken to avoid commenting on policies or political statements.
- Requests for candidates to meet with managers in the same way as an MP, MS, MEP or councillor should be declined on the grounds that they are not an elected representative. Neither the Force nor OPCC can be perceived as assuming a certain candidate is likely to win

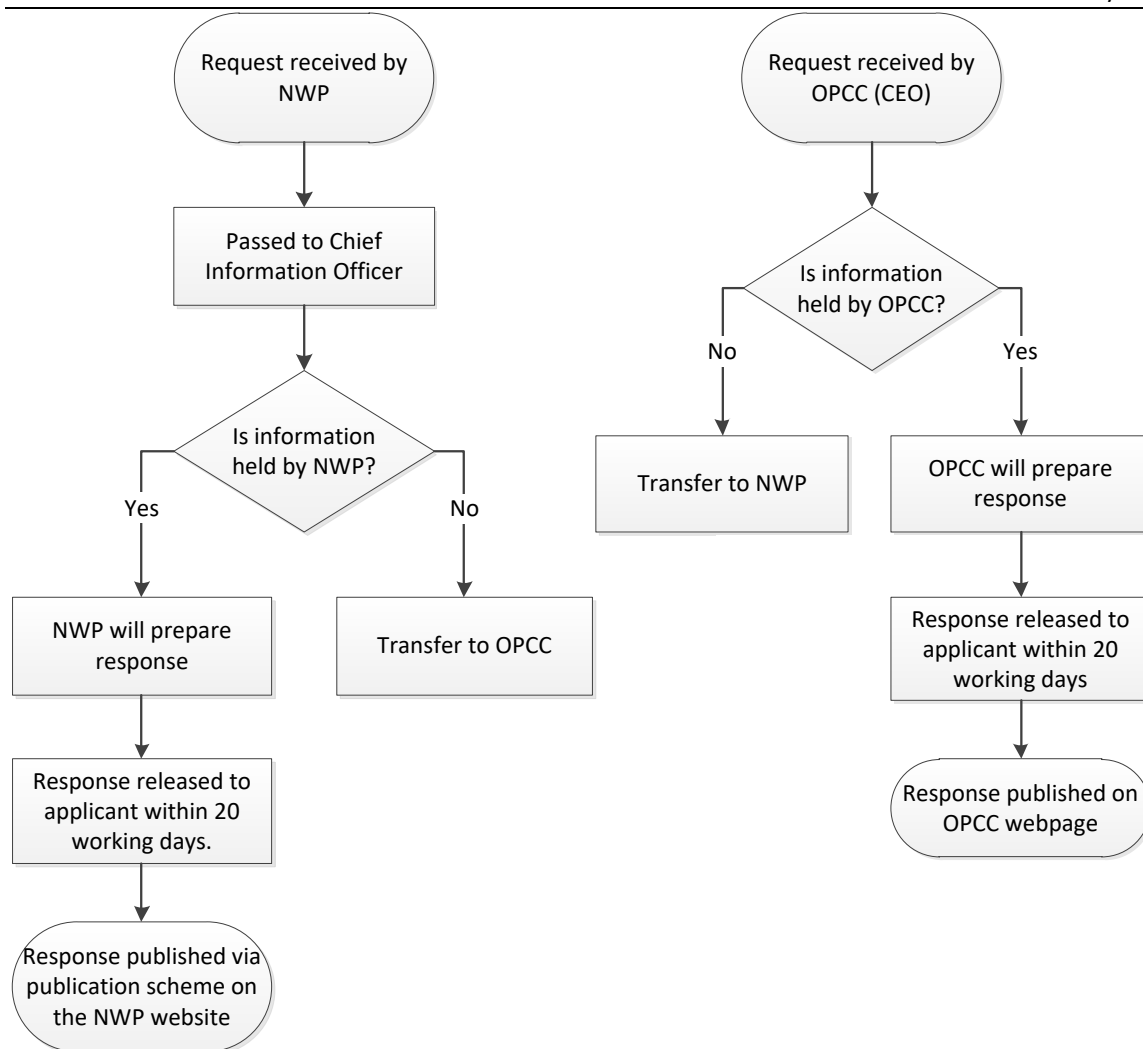
and allowing such meeting to go ahead sets a precedent with all candidates, thus diverting resources from policing activity.

- In the run up to an election, candidates may begin sending 'casework' to the Force or OPCC in the same way as that of an elected representative. Discretion should always be used in responding to any such correspondence.
- Candidates may send complaints or enquiries as representatives of individuals. Such correspondence may be dealt with in the same manner as that of an MP, MS, MEP or councillor providing that all data protection rules are adhered to.
- It should be remembered when responding to any correspondence that the content may be exploited by a candidate for political and campaigning purposes.
- When providing statements and press releases to election candidates or parties about local issues, consultation with Corporate Communications and the OPCC CEO is vital to ensure discretion when handling potentially sensitive information
- In the run up to an election, some statements or press releases from political parties or candidates may present the Force in a negative light. The decision as to whether the Force or OPCC will refute any claims will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Head of Corporate Communications, NPCC Officer and the OPCC CEO in consultation with the Police Area Returning Officer (PARO). The Force and OPCC are entitled to respond to factual inaccuracies but care must be taken not to openly criticise a party or candidate.

4.4 Election for Police and Crime Commissioner (specific guidance for requests for information)

Correspondence, requests for general information or Freedom of Information requests from candidates should be processed as follows

- General Information or Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to North Wales Police should be directed to the FOI Unit (FreedomofInformationTeam@nthewales.pnn.police.uk)
- General Information or Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to the PCC should be directed to the OPCC (opcc@nthewales.pnn.police.uk)
- Once requests for general information or Freedom of Information (FOI) are published in the public domain, regardless of whether the information was sourced by the OPCC or the Force, the OPCC will retain a log of relevant correspondence and liaise with the Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) as appropriate.
- Freedom of Information requests will be issued, managed and published in accordance with normal Freedom of Information procedures to ensure consistency and transparency.



4.5 Politically Restricted Posts (PoRPs)

Whilst this policy is in relation to pre-election periods, officers and staff are reminded that the Politically Restricted Posts Policy should be referred to at all other times.

5. DECLARATION & LEGALITIES

- 5.1 In line with all Force policies, the overarching purpose of this document is to directly support the PCC police and crime plan objectives. Overall the intention of this policy is to make North Wales the safest place in the UK.
- 5.2 In the writing of this policy cognisance has been taken of the college of policing code of ethics (2014).
- 5.3 North Wales Police policies will be written in accordance with the approved corporate format and published on the Force Intranet, allowing access to staff and public, where appropriate, on the pages of the public facing Internet site under the Force publication scheme and Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 5.4 The following main legal requirements have been identified within this policy:
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Human Rights Act 1998

- The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards for the Chief Constable
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Health and Safety Act 1974
- Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission Guidance 2012
- Local Government and Housing Act 1989
- Bribery Act 2010
- Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
- Representation of the People Act 1949
- The Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011
- The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013

5.5 This policy has been written giving due regard to the above legislation and has considered the risk of unfair and/or disproportionate impacts on individuals or groups (actual or perceived) and has done so via an equality impact assessment (EIA).

5.6 New legislative requirements or changes in Force structure may necessitate a review of this policy document.