



**Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner**

Political Impartiality Framework

For the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Cheshire Constabulary

1. Purpose and scope

To present a Framework of principles to assist the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Cheshire Constabulary from being used for political advantage during the lead-up to the May 2027 Cheshire & Warrington Mayoral election.

Although policing is not part of the new mayoral powers, the election will bring increased public, media, and political scrutiny. The current Commissioner has stated an intention to stand as a candidate, making strict clarity and transparency essential.

This Framework applies to:

- The PCC and Deputy PCC.
- All OPCC staff.
- All police officers and politically restricted police staff.

This framework will be utilised by the OPCC at its management meeting on a weekly basis to ensure the principles are constantly adhered to when planning events, communications, taking decisions etc.

2. Timeline

Period of application

This Framework applies:

- Immediately, and,
- Through to the May 2027 Mayoral election.
- With heightened sensitivity during:
 - Local elections in Halton in May 2026.
 - The formal Mayoral and local election and pre-election period (expected mid-March 2027).
 - Any by-election that may be held during this period.

3. Principles

This Framework is based on the seven Nolan principles of public life:

- Selflessness.
- Integrity.
- Objectivity.
- Accountability.
- Openness.
- Honesty.
- Leadership.

These require that no action, communication or resource of the OPCC or Constabulary gives any candidate, including an incumbent, a real or perceived advantage.

This means:

- No OPCC or Constabulary activity may appear political or supportive of any candidate / party.
- The Constabulary must maintain strict operational and perceived neutrality.
- The OPCC must operate with fairness, impartiality, transparency and clear separation between official roles and political campaigning.

4. Key definitions

Candidate

A person becomes an official candidate only from the publication of the Notice of Election (approximately 30th March 2027). However, individuals *likely* to stand, or publicly declared as intending to stand, must be treated similarly.

Mayoral pre-election period

The period beginning mid-March 2027 during which communication and decision-making must avoid any political perception.

Public resources

Includes buildings, staff time, vehicles, IT systems, phones, logos, crests, data and publicly funded travel.

Politically restricted roles

All OPCC staff (with the exception of the Deputy PCC) and certain Constabulary posts cannot take part in active political activity.

A glossary is provided in Appendix A at the foot of this document.

5. Conduct requirements for office holders standing as candidates

The incumbent PCC has declared his candidacy for the 2027 Mayoral election, and as a result, must maintain a clear, documented and visible separation between:

5.1 PCC duties

- Continue delivering the Police & Crime Plan as normal.
- Use OPCC resources only for official functions.
- Attend events in their official capacity only when directly related to PCC duties and delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.

5.2 Political / campaigning activity

- The Commissioner can act for political gain in a personal capacity or in direct relation to his role as the PCC.
- Must not use information, imagery or resources originating from the OPCC or Constabulary unless already publicly published.
- Must not imply organisational endorsement.
- Must not instigate formal campaigning before / after official PCC engagements at the same event or location without clear separation.

5.3 Use of information

The Commissioner has lots of information at his disposal. Its use in a political capacity is as follows:

Permitted:

- Publicly available information already in the public domain.
- Previously published images that do not suggest political endorsement.

Restricted:

- Confidential data.
- Confidential operational policing information.
- Material prepared using OPCC staff or systems that is not in the public domain.

5.4 Ethical framework

The Commissioner must not use public resources for political purposes. Breach could lead to:

- Public criticism.
- Investigation by the Police and Crime Panel.
- Misconduct in public office investigation (in extreme cases).

5.5 Monitoring and assurance

Where particular events, campaigns or major communications are planned, a Decision Log will be maintained by the OPCC documenting:

- Rationale.
- The link to the relevant pillar(s) in the Police & Crime Plan.

6. Public engagement

6.1 Distinguish roles

At every engagement, it will be clear in what capacity the PCC is attending. Communications, messaging and accompanying staff must reflect this distinction.

In deciding whether the resources of the OPCC are used to support an event, this will be determined by what the 'primary purpose' of that event (i.e. it is primarily linked to the PCC role in support of delivering the Police & Crime Plan). Incidental conversation or questioning which refers to the mayoral candidacy cannot be eliminated but should not be instigated by the PCC.

6.2 Use of images for political purposes

Permitted:

- Previously publicly published photos that do not imply organisational endorsement.

Not permitted:

- Images suggesting police or organisational / personal endorsement.

6.3 Event attendance

When in doubt about the political nature of events, the Commissioner must seek advice from the Monitoring Officer.

7. Use of public resources

7.1 Summary table

Resource	Permitted use	Prohibited use
OPCC / police buildings	Official duties	Campaigning, meetings with party members, political filming
OPCC pool car	Official journeys	Travel to / from political / campaign events
Staff time	Business support, factual briefings	Preparing campaign materials, canvassing, attending political events
IT systems / email	Business communications	Political messaging, campaign coordination
Social media (official accounts)	Factual, essential updates	Anything political or campaign related
Logos, crests, branding	Official communications only	Any campaign content
Photographs and imagery	For official OPCC business	To imply organisational or personal endorsement for a political campaign
Publicly funded travel	PCC official duties only	Campaign activity
Information provided solely for the PCC role	Official PCC business	For any political purpose

7.2 Key rules

- OPCC / Constabulary staff must not be asked to support political activity.
- OPCC staff may only review campaign material which may make reference to areas of the OPCC's work for *factual accuracy*, not tone or messaging.
- The PCC can refer to their role as PCC and related achievements in a political environment but care must be taken to ensure that in doing so it does not impact on the political impartiality of the office or imply political endorsement by the office / staff.

8. Sensitivity around elections (including the pre-election period)

8.1 General principles

All communications must remain:

- Factual.
- Non-political.

8.2 Prohibited activities

- Publications that could influence political opinion.
- References to candidates or parties.
- Proactive media involving candidates.
- High-profile announcements.
- New initiatives.
- Publishing politically sensitive consultation findings,

8.3 Allowed activities

- Statutory or legal activities.
- Factual information addressing harmful misinformation.
- Essential business as normal.

8.4 Decision tool

Before any activity, ask:

1. Could a reasonable person conclude public resources are being used to influence the election?
 2. Could this be perceived as favouring or disadvantaging a candidate / party?
 3. Is the messaging factual and non-political?
 4. Is the timing likely to attract political interpretation?
- If **"yes"** to 1 or 2 - do not proceed.
 - If **"uncertain"** - escalate (Section 11).

9. Information and access for candidates

The OPCC and Constabulary must:

- Share only publicly available information with candidates
- Keep a log of all candidate interactions, including:
 - Date.
 - Purpose.
 - Information provided.
 - Attendees.
- Ensure any physical materials shared with one candidate are available to all candidates upon request.

Caution must be exercised with individuals not yet formally declared as candidates.

Note: this section does not apply to information provided, and meetings between the PCC and the Constabulary, as part of the day-to-day business of the office of the PCC, as distinct to a candidate briefing.

10. Staff conduct and restrictions

10.1 Politically restricted staff (*see also Appendix A below*)

Cannot:

- Stand for certain elected offices.
- Act as election agents.
- Hold party political office.
- Canvass or campaign using work time or resources.
- Publicly endorse political messages (including liking / sharing online).

10.2 Non-restricted staff (e.g. Deputy PCC)

May engage in political campaigning activity only:

- In a personal capacity.
- Over an above of their contracted hours as DPCC.
- Without using organisational resources.
- Without implying organisational endorsement.

10.3 Consequences of breach

- Disciplinary action.
- Contractual breach.
- Reputational harm.

11. Advice and escalation

When uncertain, individuals must:

- **OPCC staff:** Contact the Monitoring Officer (OPCC Chief Executive).
- **Constabulary staff:** Contact Professional Standards or Legal Services.

The default position should always be 'caution'.

12. Compliance, monitoring and review

- Compliance will be monitored jointly by the OPCC leadership and appropriate Constabulary functions.
- A central log will record decisions with political or electoral relevance.
- This framework will be reviewed after the May Mayoral 2027 election.

Appendices

Appendix A - Glossary (summary)

Candidate: A formally declared individual following publication of Notice of Election.

Public resources: Buildings, staff time, IT systems, logos, data, vehicles, equipment.

Pre-election period: A regulated period beginning mid-March 2027 where heightened restrictions apply

Political activity: Any action intended to influence public support for a party or candidate.

The effect of occupying a politically restricted post is to prevent that individual from having any political role either in or outside of the workplace. Politically restricted employees will automatically be disqualified from standing for or holding elected office. There are also restricted from canvassing on behalf of a political party or person who is or seeks to be a candidate and speaking to the public at large or publishing any written or artistic work that could give the impression that they are advocating support for a political party [source: Politically Restricted Roles Constabulary procedure 2017.04].

Appendix B - useful resources

[NPCC's 'Political Impartiality Guide 2024'](#)

[Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authority Publicity, 2011](#)

['A short guide to publicity during the pre-election period'](#)