
Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held virtually on Thursday, 22 October 2020

Present:

Councillor

Representing

Wendy Schmitt (Chairman)	Braintree District Council
Aidan McGurran	Basildon Borough Council
Chris Hossack	Brentwood Borough Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Jeremy Lager	Chelmsford City Council
Mike Lilley	Colchester Borough Council
Holly Whitbread	Epping Forest District Council
Malcolm Maddocks	Essex County Council
Frances Mason	Harlow District Council
Lesley Butcher	Rochford District Council
Ian Shead	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Lynda McWilliams	Tendring District Council
Joycelyn Redsell	Thurrock Council

Co-opted Independent Members

John Gili-Ross
Sheila Murphy

Also in attendance

Gemma Bint	Democratic Services Officer
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Jane Gardner	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Deputy Commissioner
Elizabeth Helm	Interim Head of Finance
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Darren Horsman	Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement
Emma Tombs	Democratic Services Manager
Jo Turton	Chief Fire Officer

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report of the Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received.

1. The following apologies were noted:

- Councillor Mike Webb, Rochford District Council (substituted by Councillor Lesley Butcher)
- Councillor Colin Day, Uttlesford District Council
- Councillor Michael Helm, Maldon District Council
- Chief Constable Harrington

2. Councillor Lynda McWilliams declared a Code Interest in that her son is a police officer. Councillor McWilliams participated fully in the meeting.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2020 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman, subject to an amendment on a typographical error on page 12, whereby ENS should read ESN.

3 Questions from members of the public

The Commissioner responded to questions from a member of the public on the following subjects:

- How the budget shortfalls would be managed.
- What the plans were to ensure Fire Cadets continued to learn skills during the current public health challenge.
- Whether a wider roll out of cyber training to adult populations based in communities would be considered.
- The deliverance of safety training during the pandemic.
- Percentage of fires that were false alarms.
- What steps had been taken to address the inadequate rating of Promoting the Right Values and Culture.

4 2021/22 Budget Scene Setting

The Panel received report EPFCP/24/20, which provided the Panel with an overview of the background issues on setting the 2021/22 budget.

The Commissioner introduced the report, following which Councillor Maddocks provided an update on the Budget Working Group to the Panel.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

5 Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2019-20

The Panel received report EPFCP/25/20, which provided the Panel with the draft Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2019-2020.

The Commissioner introduced the report and pointed out that the production of an annual report was a statutory requirement.

The Panel reviewed the information provided and raised points for clarification in respect of the following:

- The next HMICFRS report.
- Supply delays for significant ICT projects.
- The process for FRS complaints and how it is addressed.
- The IRMP performance measure on the percentage of Essex homes with a working smoke alarm.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation as contained within the report. It was noted that Cllr Redsell and Cllr Mason refrained from voting on the item as they were not present throughout the entire item due to experiencing technical issues.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

6 Report on Annual Complaints 2019-20

The Panel received report EPFCP/26/20, which provided the panel with an update on the handling of complaints made against the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) since 25 October 2020.

Emma Tombs, Democratic Services Manager, introduced the report to the Panel.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation as contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

7 PFCC Decisions

The Panel received report EPFCP/27/20, which provided the Panel with information about financial and strategic decisions made by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

The Commissioner introduced the report and the Panel reviewed the information provided and raised a number of points for clarification or comment in respect of a number of the decisions taken. These included the Website Accessibility Assessment and Compliance, the Digital Interview Recording System, the Unauthorised Encampment Leaflets, the Ministry of Justice Extraordinary Funding Assessment Process, the Restorative Engagement Forum intrafamilial domestic abuse training and the Sale of the former Harlow Dog Kennels.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

8 The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to update the Panel on any ongoing Issues

The Commissioner gave a verbal update on some ongoing issues.

Response to Covid-19: Sickness levels had remained low during the pandemic and the Test and Trace system had not impacted on service availability. There was a third inspection to the Fire Service's response to Covid-19 and a policing one would also take place. There had been a significant increase in the backlog of cases in the criminal justice system, and although the Magistrates Court backlog was beginning to reduce, more work was needed to reduce the backlog in the Crown Courts. Although a recovery plan was in place, there was concern regarding the backlog of jury trials.

Accounts: The Operation Melrose investigation had successfully progressed. Court appearances were taking place, with half of those being brought to justice having pleaded guilty; and a memorial service would be held. Essex had received recognition for its work and received funding.

Business Plan: This had been updated, and once finalised would be shared with the Panel for information.

Recruitment: The post of Head of Finance had been advertised and interviews would be held in November, followed by a Confirmation Hearing in December 2020. Furthermore, work was being carried out alongside the

internal Auditors to identify and recruit two new independent members for the Audit Committee.

Road Policing: Essex responded well to the National Road Policing Survey. More than 40% of respondents felt unsafe or very unsafe on Essex's roads and more than 60% witnessed traffic offences on a daily basis.

In response to questioning, Members were reassured that the policing response to Tier 2 was consistent and they were able to enforce the rule of six in public. It was highlighted that strong messages in regard to social distancing, hand washing and face coverings must continue.

The Commissioner confirmed that the training for Speed Watch had been on hold due to Covid-19. The first teams returned with additional training at the beginning of September but unfortunately due to Tier 2, training had become challenging.

9 National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels update

The Panel received a verbal report from John Gili-Ross which provided an update on the activities of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels.

10 Budget Working Group Update

Councillor Malcolm Maddocks provided the Panel with an update under item 4 of the agenda.

11 Forward Look

The Panel received report EPFCP/28/20, setting out the business proposed to be taken to meetings up to February 2021.

The Panel noted the report.

12 Dates of Future Meetings

The Panel received report EPFCP/29/20, setting out the proposed Panel meeting dates for 2020-21.

The Panel noted the report.

13 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Panel meeting was confirmed as Thursday, 10 December 2020.

14 Urgent Business

In the opinion of the Chairman, there were no matters that should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances as a matter of urgency.

The meeting closed at 3.49pm

Chairman
10 December 2020