

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 6 February 2020

Present:

Councillor

Representing

Wendy Schmitt (Chairman)	Braintree District Council
Maria Pearson	Brentwood Borough Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Jeremy Lager	Councillor, Chelmsford City Council
Mike Lilley	Colchester Borough Council
Nigel Bedford	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
Colin Day	Uttlesford District Council

Co-opted Independent Member

Kay Odysseos

Also in attendance

Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex PFCC
Neil Cross	Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Jane Gardner	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Deputy Commissioner
Karl Edwards	Director of Corporate Services, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Victoria Freeman	Secretary to the Panel
BJ Harrington	Chief Constable
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Rick Hylton	Acting 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:
 - John Gili-Ross, Co-opted Independent Member
 - Councillor Michael Helm, Maldon District Council
 - Councillor Hossack, Brentwood Borough Council (substituted by Councillor Maria Pearson)
 - Councillor Aidan McGurran, Basildon Borough Council
 - Councillor Webb, Rochford District Council (substituted by Councillor Lesley Butcher)
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 13 January 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman following the agreed amendments below:

- Councillor Mike Lilley was not in attendance at the meeting as shown.
- Councillor Mike Webb was Vice Chairman of the Castlepoint, Rochford and Raleigh Community Safety Partnership.

3 Questions from members of the public

There were none.

4 Proposed Essex Police Precept for 2020/21

The Panel received report EPFCP/06/20 which presented the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's proposed police precept for 2020/21.

The Commissioner was accompanied by Chief Constable BJ Harrington; Pippa Brent-Isherwood, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer of the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner; and Jane Gardner, Deputy Commissioner.

As part of the 2020/21 Police Grant, the Government had provided £750m to support the recruitment of 20,000 additional Police Officers, divided into three tranches, 6,000 officers in 2020-21; 8,000 in 2021-22; and 6,000 in

2022-3. Of the £750m, £50m would be retained centrally to support the recruitment of officers and of the remaining £700m grant, £168m would be ringfenced to support the individual force recruitment targets for 2020/21. Essex would receive a share of £15.8m.

The Commissioner explained that during discussions with the Prime Minister, Home Secretary and the Home Office, it had been made clear that the most urgent need was at the very front line of policing and direct support through territorial policing, and therefore the agreement was that the first 6,000 officers would come in their entirety to the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales.

Essex Police had continued to deliver not just all they could in terms of community safety for the public but also increased productivity and continued efficiency savings, which meant that Essex could recruit an additional 151 police officers in 2020/21, of which 135 would be funded through the Government's Police Uplift Programme and a further 16 officers.

The Commissioner explained there were also internal cost pressures and inflation to consider and it was felt necessary, after a long period of stability and inflationary erosion of public sector pay that it was necessary, appropriate and commendable to be backing the 2.5% pay increase for police officers and staff and that he expected this trend to continue. Furthermore, there were additional costs such as insurance, fuel and technology investment, and in order to cover these it would be necessary to make a moderate increase in the council tax precept to 2.94%.

Investment was the next phase, with the recruitment of additional police officers into local and visible policing; investment in town centre teams and an increased strength of operational support and road policing; the new young peoples and schools policing teams; strengthened gangs team and investment in violence and vulnerability. The Service had been successful in reducing burglary, anti-social behaviour and theft across the county and there were improving signs in relation to violence, although there had yet to be an impact on assault rates.

In response to questions from the Panel the Commissioner and the Chief Constable stated:

- The Commissioner was confident that on the back of the investment being made and plans for deployment that there would be a decrease in crime, at which point, consideration would be given to increasing reserves, however he felt that building reserves would be the wrong decision at present.
- With regards to the capital investment programme, in the medium term there was a programme of estate improvement and an estate strategy, which included the refurbishment of key stations across the county and repair costs and an investment in technology. The future

capital programme would need to be funded through borrowing against fixed assets. Due to the good work by the estate teams and technology teams, expenditure had been moderated and no new debt would be incurred by the year end. Expenditure on all principal stations and custody facilities would be needed to ensure that they were safe places; and Essex Headquarters required refurbishment, however this expenditure would not impact on the ability to resource the front line.

- Essex Police would be investing £331,000 in the development of the Media and Communications Strategy and a team to communicate and engage with the public. It was explained that media was a powerful tool in terms of prevention, intervention and engagement and also for recruitment.
- Although the budget settlement had enabled investment in the force, continued efficiency savings would be needed to balance the budget and cover the medium term deficit. The 2020/21 budget required Essex Police to make cashable savings of £4.734m.
- The Force Control Room had experienced a year on year increase in 999 calls, in order to improve call handling capacity, it was proposed to increase the number of call handlers to assist with the increased demand. Other means of reporting were being addressed to reduce the time taken to speak to an operator, such as online reporting. The Resolution Centre Programme had been established to seek to resolve solutions quickly and offer a more convenient form of reporting for residents, leaving officers on the front line able to respond quicker to more urgent emergencies and be more proactive with preventative work.
- The Estate Disposals revenue of -£0.161m related to the running costs of those buildings which would be disposed of during the following year.
- There was a Section 22 agreement in place between all forces in the country to support the National Air Police Service. Essex benefited from the service which was hosted by West Yorkshire Police on a cost reimbursement basis.

The recommendation that there be a precept increase of 2.94%, equivalent to an increase of £5.67 a year from £192.96 to £198.63 for a Band D property, raising £3.7m of additional council tax receipts was put to the vote by the Panel Chairman. Following consideration of the report and having listened to his justification of the need for an increase, the Panel voted to accept the Commissioner's proposal for a precept increase with 12 for; and two against (Councillors Day and Lilley).

5 Proposed Essex Fire and Rescue Service Precept for 2020-21

The Panel received report EPFCP/07/20 which presented the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's proposed Fire and Rescue Service precept for 2020/21.

The Commissioner was accompanied by Pippa Brent-Isherwood, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer of the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner; and Jane Gardner, Deputy Commissioner.

In presenting the report, the Commissioner brought to Members attention the long term history of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, particularly around the cultural change programme and the improvement of the Service as a place to work. An increased efficient delivery of the Service remained a priority and a key area for further investment was in operational training and development, with £900,000 having been invested in 2019-20 and a forecasted £500,000 for 2020-21 and a capital investment of £548,000. Ongoing training and development was key and backed by the peer review and Her Majesty's Inspectorate. Also highlighted was Technical Fire Safety and there was an action plan for its delivery. £500,000 had been forecasted for investment in Technical Fire Safety in 2020-21, alongside £500,000 of revenue investment and £500,000 of capital expenditure. The Service had established an On-call Development Programme, which would look to improve the recruitment and retention of On-call firefighters, review their current terms and conditions and identify areas where additional support would be most effective. There was a need to update information and communication software, at a cost in excess of £2.8m over this year and the next.

In response to whether the budget would overcome the issues raised in Her Majesty's Inspectorate report, the Commissioner stated that the programme for cultural improvement was heading in the right direction and that this had been recognised. There had been a significant move forward. It had been the Commissioner's view that there was a need to change the way the Service recruited, and appraised and defined its development plans; there was a need to improve learning and training, and promotion programme, and put in place an improved complaints procedures, all of which had been completed. The Commissioner believed that if the Service received the budgeted resources and the plan remained on track, that the Service would receive good ratings from the Inspectorate.

The recommendation that there be a precept increase of 1.99%, equivalent to an increase of £1.44 a year from £72.45 to £73.89 for a Band D property, raising £935,000 of additional council tax receipts was put to the vote by the Panel Chairman. Following consideration of the report and having listened to his justification of the need for an increase, the Panel voted unanimously to accept the Commissioner's proposal for a precept increase.

6 Dates of the next meetings

The Panel will next meet at 2.00pm on Thursday, 13 February 2020 in Committee Room 1, County Hall. There will be a pre-meeting for Panel Members only, commencing at 1.00pm.

With no urgent business, the meeting closed at 3.22 pm.

Chairman
4 June 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 13 February 2020

Present:

Councillor	Representing
Wendy Schmitt (Chairman)	Braintree District Council
Maria Pearson	Brentwood Borough Council
Aidan McGurran	Basildon Borough Council
Jeremy Lager	Chelmsford City Council
Frances Mason	Harlow District Council
Mike Webb	Rochford District Council
Ian Shead	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Lynda McWilliams	Tendring District Council
Michael Helm	Maldon District Council
Joycelyn Redsell	Thurrock Council
Colin Day	Uttlesford District Council

Also in attendance

Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Jane Gardner	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Deputy Commissioner
Victoria Freeman	Secretary to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Rick Hylton	Acting Chief Fire Officer, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

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 Chris Hossack, Brentwood Borough Council (substituted by Councillor Maria Pearson)
- Councillor Godfrey Isaacs, Castle Point Borough Council
- Councillor Mike Lilley, Colchester Borough Council
- Councillor Nigel Bedford, Epping Forest District Council
- Councillor Malcolm Maddocks, Essex County Council
- John Gili-Ross, Co-opted Independent Member
- Kay Odysseos, Co-opted Independent Member

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

2 Questions from members of the public

There were none.

3 Essex Police Performance Report - Quarter 3 2019/20

The Panel received report EPFCP/08/20, which provided an overview of Essex Police's progress in delivering the priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan 2016-20, based on data and other information to December 2019.

Introducing the item, the Commissioner highlighted that progress had been made in a few areas, in particular the Special Constabulary was 8.8% larger than at the same time the previous year, with 519 officers compared with 477 in December 2018; there had been great success with the neighbourhood watch and the hate crime reporting centres. The Force Control Room had reduced the average waiting time for calls to 11 minutes and investment continued in this area. The Force Control Room Digital Online Team went live in October 2019 and provided information and intelligence in the initial stages of a critical operation / investigation in cases where digital sources could be exploited. The Resolution Centre had been opened fully in December 2019 and managed less complex crime investigation.

The Panel's attention was brought to the success of the Essex Police Victim Navigator, which had triaged 76 Modern Slavery Human Trafficking crimes since October; and the Police Online Investigation Team who had executed 50 search warrants in October and November this year and safeguarded 81 children in the same period. In response to questioning, the Commissioner stated that there had been much scrutiny regarding the effectiveness of Essex Police following the recent incident in Thurrock. A submission had been made for the reimbursement of additional costs, and although the request would not automatically be granted as the threshold had not been met, the Commissioner remained optimistic. An interest was indicated by the Panel in modern slavery trends and clusters.

Essex Police continued to work closely with the multi-agency Safer Essex Road Partnership on enforcement, engagement and education to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on Essex roads and were on track to reduce these numbers.

The Panel asked what strategies were in place to reduce the drug supply throughout Essex. The Commissioner explained that the Violence and Vulnerability Unit continued to be a hugely successful partnership and that county line drug operations were being disrupted.

Members asked questions about the report, relating to a number of issues, including the possibility of a 101 divert scheme and learning from market leaders; the impact that the new Force Control Room Digital Online Team

had since its introduction; and the viability of holding completed home forensic samples in excess of 25 years.

The report was noted.

4 Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Performance Report - Quarter 2 2019/20

The Panel received report EPFCP/09/20, setting out the performance of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service for the second quarter of 2019/20, against a number of key metrics aligned to the Fire and Rescue Plan.

Introducing the item, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner highlighted that the number of Accidental Dwelling Fires and deliberate fires had fallen in the last quarter; first attendance to potentially life threatening calls had been steadily improving; there were no fatalities from fires during the second quarter; and the availability of on call crews remained a challenge. There was a plan to deal with the issue of technical fire safety and inspection of non-residential properties and the new Integrated Risk Management Plan would be key in providing direction in resolving these issues.

Members asked questions about the report, relating to a number of issues, including the sprinkler installation projects; staff sickness, in particular in respect of mental health; management steps taken to change the culture within the Service; and home visits to vulnerable groups.

The report was noted.

5 Police Complaints Reform

The Panel received report EPFCP/10/20, which provided an overview of the changes to the police complaints system and how the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner was responding to these.

During questioning, it was explained that it was the role of the Commissioner's office to review the effectiveness of the complaints procedure and that the Commissioner received and reviewed quarterly data.

It was confirmed that there were sufficient Independent legally trained Chairs available following a recent recruitment round which had attracted a good quality calibre of candidates.

The report was noted.

6 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (PFCCFRA) Constitution

The Panel received report EPFCP/11/20, which invited comments from the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the contents of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority's updated Constitution prior to its adoption.

It was noted that Schedule 16 of the Constitution needed to be updated to reflect the current terms of reference for the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

The report was noted.

7 PFCC Decisions

The Panel received report EPFCP/12/20, which provided the Panel with information about financial and strategic decisions made by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

The Panel reviewed the information provided and questioned the use of speed camera devices by local residents. It was explained that a branch of Community Speed Watch were trained to use the Tracam technology, however the technology was becoming outdated and consideration would be given to rolling out the new generation technology when available.

The report was noted.

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

The Commissioner explained that the National Audit Office had previously reported a lack of national strategic direction in policing and that the new Government was looking to reshape police within existing legislation to find better ways of co-ordinating nationally and there was now a National Policing Board which looked at improvements in national co-ordination.

9 National Association of Police Fire and Crime Panel Update

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

The Panel noted the report.

10 Forward Look

The Panel received report EPFCP/14/20, setting out the business proposed to be taken to meetings up to December 2020.

It was noted that a Confirmation Hearing would need to be arranged as a separate meeting on the 4 June 2020.

The Panel requested that the Decision Report be presented to each meeting, with the exception of those meetings where the Panel were requested to consider the precepts.

The Panel noted the report.

11 Future Meeting Dates

The Panel received report EPFCP/15/20, setting out the proposed Panel meeting dates for 2020.

The Panel noted the report.

12 Dates of the next meetings

The Panel will next meet at 2.00pm on Thursday, 4 June 2020 in Committee Room 1, County Hall. There will be a pre-meeting for Panel Members only, commencing at 1.00pm.

13 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.

With no urgent business, the meeting closed at 3.23 pm.

**Chairman
4 June 2020**