

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 7 February 2019

Present:

Councillor

Representing

Anthony Hedley	Basildon Borough Council
Wendy Schmitt	Braintree District Council (Chairman)
Chris Hossack	Brentwood District Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Ian Wright	Chelmsford City Council
Mike Lilley	Colchester Borough Council
Malcolm Maddocks	Essex County Council
Penny Channer	Maldon District Council
Mike Webb	Rochford District Council
Fay Evans	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Carlo Guglielmi	Tendring District Council
Joycelyn Redsell	Thurrock Council
Howard Ryles	Uttlesford District Council
John Gili-Ross	Independent Member
Kay Odysseos	Independent Member

Apologies for Absence

Bob Shepherd	Chelmsford City Council
Chris Vince	Harlow District Council
Ann Holland	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Lynda McWilliams	Tendring District Council
Susan Barker	Uttlesford District Council

Also in attendance

Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex PFCC
Jane Gardner	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Jo Turton	Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, Essex CFRS

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Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report of the Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received and it was noted that Councillor Mike Webb is now the confirmed representative on the Panel for Rochford District Council; also:

1. Councillor Bob Shepherd, Chelmsford City Council; Councillor Sam Kane, Epping Forest District Council; Councillor Chris Vince, Harlow District Council; Councillor Ann Holland,

- Southend-on-Sea Borough Council; Councillor Lynda McWilliams, Tendring District Council; and Councillor Susan Barker, Uttlesford District Council had sent their apologies.
2. Councillor Ian Wright, Chelmsford City Council substituted for Councillor Shepherd; Councillor Fay Evans, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council substituted for Councillor Holland; Councillor Carlo Guglielmi, Tendring District Council substituted for Councillor McWilliams; and Councillor Howard Ryles, Uttlesford District Council substituted for Councillor Barker.
 3. Councillors declared Code Interests as follows:

Name	Nature of Interest
M Maddocks	In receipt of a Police Pension
W Schmitt	Chairman of the Braintree Community Safety Partnership
C Hossack	Member of the Brentwood Community Safety Partnership
G Isaacs	Vice-Chairman of the Castle Point and Rochford Community Safety Partnership
J Redsell	Member of the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership
M Webb	Chairman of the Castle Point and Rochford Community Safety Partnership

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman following the agreed amendments, on those present at the meeting, below:

Minute 1 (item 1): Councillor Wendy Schmitt was in attendance and was the Chairman; and Councillor Lynda McWilliams had sent her apologies for the meeting.

3 Questions from the public

There were none.

4 Essex Fire and Rescue Plan Report

The Commissioner was accompanied by Pippa Brent-Isherwood, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer of the Office of the PFCC; Jane Gardner, Deputy Commissioner; and Jo Turton, Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive of the Essex Fire and Rescue Service for this agenda item.

Councillor Maddocks, as Chairman of the sub-group which considered the draft versions of the Plan, thanked the rest of the sub-group as well as the team from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for working well together in consideration of the Plan.

The Commissioner, in return, thanked the sub-group for the healthy and open process in bringing the Plan together as a critical document which fills the same purpose for the Essex Fire and Rescue Service as the Police and

Crime Plan. The Fire and Rescue Plan has had similar partner buy-in throughout the county as the Police and Crime Plan had. The Plan has eight key priorities and has a clarity of commitment and contains the metrics by which the service will be held accountable. It is a robust framework giving strategic direction; and will, hopefully be considered a nationally important document. Based upon the survey the Plan has considerable public support.

The Commissioner stated he had given an assurance to the Essex FBU that he would feed back their concerns to the Panel. The FBU had:

- Made it clear there are elements within the Plan that they cannot agree with. These are, in the main, around the broadening of the role of firefighters, which is a national debate. The Commissioner stated he would work constructively with the FBU around broadening the role of the service
- Not regarded improving road safety as part of the role map of the service as firefighters do not see reducing road traffic accidents as part of their role. Despite this there is a willingness to discuss and negotiate
- Stated it would need to know greater detail around the “protecting vulnerable people from harm” priority before it could support this
- Confirmed it fully supports the “protect, prevent and respond” priority
- Confirmed it supports the “cultural change” priority. Stating it was ‘fantastic to see’
- Accepted the general thrust of the plan

The Commissioner guided the Panel to reflect on the FBUs thoughts prior to any support for the Plan. In commending the Plan to the Panel the Commissioner stated it is a comprehensive guide for the Essex Fire and Rescue Service for the next four to five years.

In response to questions from the Panel the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and the Chief Fire Officer stated:

- No responses were excluded from the consultation process. This enabled individual ‘voices’ from families and watches could have differing opinions. Although there were some identical comments there was not enough to cause any concern around replication. After the closing date 15 further responses were received but these did not substantially change the thoughts on the Plan
- A full copy of the FBU observations to Councillor Maddocks as the Chairman of the sub-group, would be provided

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- Incidents of bullying, discrimination and harassment are going down and there has been an enormous amount of work done to improve this. The first round of inspections of Fire and Rescue Services across the country are currently underway. The general findings, to date, show a mixed picture in terms of the treatment of people; although effectiveness of the services overall is very good. Essex County Fire and Rescue Service will be inspected in the summer and a similar picture is expected as to embed cultural change is a long process
 - The survey attempted to reach as wide a demographic as possible, and it was disappointing that only 1% of respondents were under the age of 25. Perhaps more could have been done on university campuses and college locations; yet, overall, more responses were received than the benchmark for such surveys. There has been engagement with the Young Essex Assembly and it is recognised that more work needs to be done with younger members of society
 - False alarms are an area of focus, and they are falling year-on-year, but are still a significant concern. All calls are challenged with analysis showing that many false alarms are raised from large organisations. Hospitals, in particular, have a high level of false alarms. Work has been done with Southend and Broomfield Hospitals to reduce these
 - The first phase of full-time fire officers' recruitment for over nine years is underway. The first two cohorts of recruitment have been completed with 23 new fire officers appointed - the plan is to recruit 49 in total. Workforce and success planning are currently being looked at; as is retention. It is more of an issue recruiting on-call fire officers and a campaign for recruitment is ongoing. The on-call contract is being looked at to see how a more flexible approach can be introduced to fit in with modern lives. The Plan is a forward-looking document that does not dwell on the past with cultural change at the forefront. The Fire and Rescue Service is recruiting to change career patterns with a minimum of 435 fire officers to be deployed as front-line crews
 - In terms of workforce diversity five of the 49 new recruits are female – this is less than was wanted but, nevertheless, still important. This could be improved and the service will continue to focus on the diversity of its workforce. Fitness assessments are an area where lessons might be learned as female applicants failed at this stage rather than on capabilities and reasoning. There were no new recruits from BME communities – which is a concern and remains a serious focus for future recruitment. Consideration is being given to proactively targeting female and BME candidates and recruitment activity in areas where there are large BME communities

- All the workforce was engaged in the consultation through management and station meetings. The survey was also promoted internally. Unions other than the FBU were engaged also
- To engage with some of the hardest to reach people in Essex, Firebreaks has been very successful in giving people a sense of purpose and making a positive contribution to society. This along with Fire Cadets form part of the Fire and Rescue Service workforce strategy

Panel members made the following observations:

Councillor Hedley stated he was not entirely surprised by the comments made by the FBU. There are more deaths and injuries as a result of road traffic incidents than any other call-out and there is work going on within the fire service to address this so, he found the FBU comments disappointing, and would support the Commissioner to continue the discussions with the union. With regard to a more diverse workforce he stated new recruits should come into the service with a different view of what is acceptable behaviour in the workplace. On-call crew retention might become an issue due to the reduction in activity and, thus, the earning potential.

Councillor Isaacs stated the Plan is an excellent working document and congratulated the OPFCC for its production. He suggested the document could be sharper in future iterations.

Kay Odysseos stated she would have liked to have seen some more information on how the Fire and Rescue Service is going to link in with the digital agenda in future, particularly given the smart technology going into homes with best use of resources reducing risk through digital. She also referred to some of the public sector 'speak' within the Plan; and future iterations reflecting upon this and management terms.

Councillor Hossack supported the use of technical language in the Plan, however, but echoed the opinion that management terms and acronyms be eradicated.

Councillor Channer suggested faith-based and community groups could also be actively targeted to increase diversity within the workforce.

The Chairman thanked the sub-group and the staff of the OPFCC for the work on the Plan; and recommended to the Panel that the Plan be approved, recognising that it is an iterative document. This was unanimously agreed.

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The Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Budget 2018/19

The Secretary to the Panel presented the report to the Panel and highlighted the anticipated end of year claim to the Home Office.

John Gili-Ross highlighted there is additional spend on the training line that had not been included. He also suggested the claim be divided by

expenditure related to Police and Crime, and the expenditure related to the Fire and Rescue Service. The Secretary to the Panel confirmed this would be done and presented to the Panel prior to the submission to the Home Office as well as presented at the next meeting of the Panel.

The report was noted.

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

The Commissioner informed the Panel that an update on the deployment of the 150 police officers appointed from the precept rise in 2017/18 as well as the breakdown of the 215 new officers to be recruited from the 2019/20 precept increase will be presented in a report to the next meeting of the Panel. The report will be available in advance of the meeting and be circulated to the Panel.

There was an intention to have discussions with the Home Office on public sector budgets following the Comprehensive Spending Review by the end of March. However, this is no longer possible. The process will continue but it is now unrealistic for any outcomes to be included in the November 2019 budget. Therefore, 2021/22 is the likely year that additional funding will be forthcoming if Home Office negotiations prove successful.

The Commissioner stated he values his relationship with the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel and, therefore, awaits with interest the deliberations and considerations around the update of the guidance from the LGA on the relationship between Commissioners and Panels.

7 Forward Look

The Secretary to the Panel stated that updates on the Emergency Services Network and on IT projects would be scheduled into the forward look following discussions with the Office of the PFCC. With this update the report was noted.

8 Date of Next Meeting

The Panel will next meet on Thursday, 23 May 2019 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 1, County Hall. The substantive items will be Performance Measures, Home Office Complaints Procedures, and the update on new Police Officers. There will be a pre-meeting for Panel Members only from 1.15 p.m.

There is a meeting for those on the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee on Thursday, 18 April 2019 at 10.00 a.m. in Committee Room 5, County Hall.

With no urgent business the meeting closed at 3.19 p.m.

Chairman
23 May 2019