

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 23 May 2019

Present:

Councillor	Representing
Wendy Schmitt	Braintree District Council (Chairman)
Marie Pearson	Brentwood District Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Colin Lager	Chelmsford City Council
Mike Lilley	Colchester Borough Council
Nigel Bedford	Epping Forest District Council
Michael Helm	Maldon District Council
Ian Shead	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Joycelyn Redsell	Thurrock Council

Co-opted Independent Members

John Gili-Ross
Kay Odysseos

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
BJ Harrington	Chief Constable, Essex Police
Rick Hylton	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Essex CFRS
Paul Turner	Director, Legal and Assurance
Emma Tombs	Democratic Services Manager
Matthew Waldie	Democratic Services 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 Chris Hossack, Brentwood District Council, substituted by Cllr Marie Pearson
Councillor Malcolm Maddocks, Essex County Council
Councillor Frances Mason, Harlow District Council
Councillor Mike Webb, Rochford District Council
Councillor Lynda McWilliams, Tendring District Council.
2. Councillors declared Code Interests as follows and participated fully in the meeting:

Name	Nature of Interest
Wendy Schmitt	Chairman of the Braintree Community Safety Partnership
Nigel Bedford	Serving member of the London Fire Brigade
Godfrey Isaacs	Vice-Chairman of the Castle Point and Rochford Community Safety Partnership
Joycelyn Redsell	Member of Thurrock Safety Partnership
Ian Shead	In receipt of an Essex Police Pension

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Questions from the public

There were none.

4 Force Growth Plan

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner introduced the item, reminding members that the report had been produced at the request of the Panel.

He drew members' attention to the figures in the report, noting an increase in the number of officers in post above the initial target of 150, to 280, with particular reference to community policing.

The Chief Constable confirmed that the priority for the increase in resources had been to strengthen local policing and that the intention was to ensure a high staffing level of local teams.

Members noted the growth programme and received clarification on some details in the report.

5 Essex Police Performance Report Q4 2018/19

The Commissioner drew attention to the work in a number of areas:

- The number of Special Constables has grown and was proving to be an important addition to visible policing
- Several successful operations had led to numerous arrests and had made people safer in their communities. The Chief Constable added that it was not always possible for the Police to be explicit about what they were doing, but they were always actively engaged in operations within the community
- Hate crime. A number of initiatives had been put in place to raise awareness and educate people about this unacceptable behaviour

- Road Traffic. More drug driving offences were being detected, thanks to the use of drug wipes. Education was needed on the potential dangers. Fatalities – the overall trend was downward, although this quarter had seen an increase
- Response times to the non-emergency 101 number had improved but still needed to get better. The summer months might prove challenging, as the number of calls increased
- Anti-social behaviour was trending downward across the county, although some of this might be due to recategorizing of offences
- Domestic abuse had shown an underlying increase – but not just because of improved reporting. Some limited targeting of individuals had produced good results, but it was not possible just to scale up this approach
- Although there was some way to go in respect of serious violence, on a national comparison, the response in Essex was good and its violence and vulnerability framework and unit was being used as a model for other counties.

In response, several comments were made by members, emphasising the need for education in various spheres and the importance of making the public aware of what officers are doing. The increasing use of the internet and social media was noted. The Police were aware of their possibilities and were learning how best to use them. Concerns were expressed about consistency in chasing speeding motor cyclists, for instance. In response, the Chief Constable confirmed that pursuit was normally an option, as they had trained officers and appropriate vehicles for the task, but on each occasion a decision had to be made, with regard to proportionality.

The Panel noted the report.

The Chief Constable left the meeting at this point.

6 Essex County Fire & Rescue Service Performance and Assurance Framework

The Chairman welcomed Rick Hylton, the new Deputy Chief Fire Officer to the meeting. Members received report EPCP/10/19, setting out the progress on the proposed new Performance and Assurance Framework for the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

The Commissioner pointed out that there was a greater level of detail in the paper than would normally be shared with the Panel, but he stressed the need to include the information most meaningful to members in future reports.

In response to a query on whether some on-call personnel would ride more often than others, it was pointed out that normally the first firefighters with the appropriate skills to arrive at the station would ride; otherwise a delay

might be incurred. This was an area that the Commissioner might look at further.

In response to a question, the Commissioner confirmed that the service had a programme of providing smoke alarms to the public. This currently was running at 8,000 per annum, but he believed this could increase. This accorded well with the preventative approach of the Plan.

The report was noted.

7 PFCC Decisions Report

Members received report EPCP/13/19, providing information on financial and strategic decisions made by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner since the last PFCC Panel meeting submission deadline.

In response to a question on Police Estate Planning, in respect of income, the Commissioner confirmed that there was a £90 million investment programme planned, with a lot of improvements needed in a number of retained properties. £30 million had to be found over the next five years and this could be through borrowing, Government grants and disposal of property.

The Panel noted the report.

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

The Commissioner gave a brief verbal update on some ongoing issues:

- The new Senior Management Team was now in place. Its mix of new recruits and long-standing members made it well positioned to bring forward the cultural and behavioural changes needed
- A recruitment process was underway to bring in new staff. The response had been very good so far
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services had carried out a recent inspection. It rated the Police Service good in all 3 areas, although one negative concerned the response times for 101 calls. The inspection of the Fire and Rescue Service was expected in July, to report in November. The Commissioner expected a "needs further improvement" rating, because of the existing behavioural and cultural issues, although he believed the measures in place to deal with these to be robust and bode well for the future
- The Violence and Vulnerability Round Table was held on 10 May. This had excellent participation at a senior level from all stakeholders and should lead to greater input and cooperation in future from the NHS in particular

- The independent custody visitors in Essex were recently awarded the Independent Custody Visitors Association Silver Award.

The Commissioner agreed to circulate a chart showing the new senior management structure to members.

9 Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee

The Chairman noted that the Commissioner had covered this in his report, with regard to the work on standards.

10 National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels update

Mr Gili-Ross, as Chairman of the National Association, confirmed he had already provided a verbal update to members but informed members that the PCP guidance notes had been rewritten and would be launched in July at the LGA Conference.

11 Essex PFCP Budget 2018/19 Outturn

The Panel received report EPFCP/14/19, which provided an update on the Office's outturn position as filed with the Home Office in April 2019.

In response to a member's query, Mr Turner confirmed that the Administration Costs covered all costs except for Member Expenses, which were out of pocket expenses. He pointed out that a breakdown of these costs was available and indicated that members could have a copy if they requested.

Concerns were expressed that the claim seemed very low compared to the grant available.

Mr Turner explained that:

- The Essex Panel had always underspent its grant. The expenditure shown in the report represented the financial resources consumed in the course of the year and had been signed off by the County Council's Senior Financial Officer, as was required by the Home Office
- The County Council cannot at any point receive any more monies than its total expenditure figure, as payment is only ever made in response to a claim which is based on actual expenditure
- He understood if the Panel believed it needed greater resourcing, particularly as the Fire and Rescue Service had been added to its responsibilities then this was something which should be discussed between the County Council as host authority and the Panel
- The budget figure of £46,000 presented to the Panel at its 7 February 2019 meeting had not been paid as it could not be based on actual expenditure and could not be signed off by the Finance Officer; hence the revised figure was being presented to the Panel. He confirmed that he had put new procedures in place to ensure that the Panel would receive more accurate information than that provided in February.

- The Panel had not been asked to approve the budget figure in February but to note it; and this was the case on this occasion. His understanding was that the formula used by the Home Office to arrive at the amount of grant available was based on population size, not take up of funds, so asking for a smaller amount should not jeopardise the level of funding in the future.

Some Members expressed concern that their inability to approve the figures undermined their role. It was explained that the accounts were financial information and could only be based on likely spend and they were for the finance officer of the host authority to approve. They also wanted to consider future resourcing of the Panel. The Chairman suggested that a working group should be set up to consider this matter.

The Panel noted the report.

12 Adoption of revised constitution and payment of Panel Members' allowances

The Panel considered report EPFCP/15/19, seeking the Panel's approval to agree Part II of the revised constitution and to introduce the payment of allowances for Panel Members.

After some discussion around several aspects of this proposal, and a suggestion by Mr Gili-Ross that the Panel should adopt a two stage hearing for confirmation of appointments, so that the decision was not made at the same meeting as the one attended by the candidate for appointment, the Panel agreed the following:

1. That the Panel notes that part one of the Constitution (the Panel Arrangements) has been adopted by all the Essex local authorities.
2. That the Panel agrees to adopt:
 - (a) The Functions of the Panel Document as at the first part of appendix 1
 - (b) Part 2 of the Constitution as at the relevant part of appendix 1., subject to the amendments suggested by the Commissioner in a paper tabled at the meeting (appended as Annex A to these minutes).
3. That the Panel adopts, on an interim basis, the scheme of allowances at appendix 2 with effect from 1 April 2019 amended as follows.
 - (a) Paragraph 3 be amended to read:

‘No person may claim more than any limit determined by the Home Office grant agreement for each financial year under this scheme.’

- (b) The second class of approved duties in paragraph 5 be amended to read:
‘Attending a meeting of any officer of the Lead Authority or the section 4A Fire and Rescue Authority or the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in connection with the functions of the Panel’
- (c) A new class of approved duties:
‘Such other duty in connection with the work of the panel where the member concerned has the prior written agreement of the Chairman that expenses may be claimed’.

- 4. That the Secretary of the Panel and the Director, Legal and Assurance arrange a workshop discussion for those panel members who are interested to make recommendations on

- (a) A longer term scheme of allowances once we have heard further from the Home Office as to the use of the grant;
- (b) Support for the panel;
- (c) The possible introduction of a two stage confirmation meeting process for senior appointments so there is a pause between the first meeting and the panel’s decision.

13 Forward Look

The Panel considered report EPFCP/16/19, setting out business proposed to be taken at meetings up to February 2020.

The Chairman confirmed that the election for Chairman for the rest of the year would take place at the July meeting.

The Panel noted the report.

14 Date of Next Meeting

The Panel will next meet on Thursday, 25 July 2019 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 1, County Hall. There will be a pre-meeting for Panel Members only from 1.15 p.m.

With no urgent business the meeting closed at 4.43 pm

Chairman
25 July 2019

Minute 12: Adoption of revised constitution and payment of Panel Members' allowances

Annex A

In relation to Part 1 of the constitution – Functions of the Panel

- In Para 1.3 reference to the Police, Crime and Fire Commissioner – this should be to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
- In Para 5.9 amend to make it clear that the three week period also applies to the appointment of the chief fire officer
- In Para 6.4 (a) amend to make it clear that the panel may consult Chief Fire and Rescue Inspector for England, where it is proposed to dismiss the Chief Fire Officer.