

Essex Police and Crime Panel	EPCP/09/17
Date: 1 June 2017	

The Future of the Panel

Report by the Secretary to the Panel

Enquiries to: Robert Fox

Purpose of report

To consider what actions are required for reviewing the role of the Panel in holding the Commissioner to account if and when he assumes responsibility for the Fire Service.

Specifically, the Panel should consider its response to the following options:

- to review its membership and composition in the short and long-term
- to consider the knowledge, experience and developmental needs of the Panel.
- to consider if there would be any advantage in having a “buddy” system provided by members of the former EFA.
- to review its terms of reference and procedure rules to make sure they are fit for purpose.
- depending on the timescales available, to consider having a “shadow” role for the Panel in relation to Fire Service-related matters.
- To hold an additional meeting of the Panel in September to focus on the Commissioner’s new role and Fire Service-related matters.

Background

The Fire Authority had been keen to set up a task and finish group with members of the Police and Crime Panel to discuss the potential future role of the Panel when and if the Fire and Rescue Service comes under the governance of the Commissioner.

A copy of the note of that meeting is attached.

Following on from the meeting good contact has been established with the LGA over the role of the Panel which has increased opportunities to influence the thinking of the Home Office. Initial enquiries have resulted in the following information from the LGA. Not much in the way of new regulation is expected, although the existing regulations will need to be looked over and possibly tweaked. The panel is likely to

have broadly the same role on fire as it does in respect of the police. So they won't be expected to look at operational matters, but they will be expected to scrutinise the decisions the Commissioner makes in respect of the fire service and look at any complaints received about the Commissioner. For much of the Panel's area of responsibilities it is expected that the policing and fire elements will be wrapped up together. Although police and fire budgets will remain separate, it is not anticipated there would be separate consideration of the fire precept – it will be part of the wider discussion about the police precept. Similarly it is likely that the police and crime plan will be expanded to include fire elements rather than there being a separate plan. There will be no statutory requirement for confirmation hearings for chief fire officer appointments.

Panel Members have been provided with links to the papers for Fire Authority meetings and reminded they are able to attend.

**Action notes arising from a meeting of the Essex Emergency Services
Collaboration Joint EFA/PCP Task and Finish Group held at Fire HQ, Kelvedon
Park, Rivenhall on Wednesday, 1 March 2017**

Essex Fire Authority (EFA)

Councillors Blackwell, Guglielmi, Hedley and McEwen

Essex Police and Crime Panel (EPCP)

Councillors Schmidt and Shepherd and John Gili-Ross

Apologies

Kay Odysseos, EPCP, and Councillor Woodley, EFA

Officers

Adam Eckley	EFRS
Susannah Hancock	OPCC
Anna Hook	ECC
Colin Ismay	ECC

Terms of Reference

The Fire Authority had been keen to set up a task and finish group with members of the Police and Crime Panel to discuss the potential future role of the Panel when and if the Fire and Rescue Service comes under the governance of the Commissioner.

Discussion focussed on how the Panel might ensure it has the appropriate level of fire focus / knowledge to inform its discussions; and what resources might it need to scrutinise the Commissioner to the same extent that it does for Police matters.

Action points arising from the discussion

- The role of the Panel was clarified in relation to the powers of the Fire Authority that will transfer to the Commissioner.
- It was acknowledged that this discussion was taking place without advice being available from the LGA or the Home Office. Anna Hook / Colin Ismay to see if there is any guidance available from the LGA and to explore if there are any opportunities to lobby the Home Office to ensure the Panel has the necessary resources and sufficient sanctions to be able to fulfil its role in a meaningful way.
- To fulfil its role the Panel (a) relies on the good will and co-operation of the Commissioner and his Office; (b) needs good reports and information from the Commissioner; and (c) advice and support from officers of the lead authority as currently provided by Anna Hook and Colin Ismay in relation to Police matters.
- Colin Ismay will arrange for a report to the Panel for it:
 - to review its membership and composition in the short and long-term. The membership must comprise one councillor from each of the 15 local authorities in Essex and two independent members. The Panel may co-

opt further members on to the Panel provided the overall size does not exceed 20 and the Secretary of State approves the co-options. Co-optees can be used to fill experience, knowledge and skills gaps to help make the Panel more effective.

- to consider the knowledge, experience and developmental needs of the Panel.
- to consider if there would be any advantage in having a “buddy” system provided by members of the former EFA.
- to review its terms of reference and procedure rules to make sure they are fit for purpose.
- Depending on the timescales available, to consider having a “shadow” role for the Panel in relation to Fire Service-related matters.
- Colin Ismay to explore with Susannah Hancock the possibility of an additional meeting of the Panel in September to focus on the Commissioner’s new role and Fire Service-related matters.
- Colin Ismay to provide Panel Members to links to the papers for Fire Authority meetings and to remind them they are able to attend.