

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held virtually on Thursday, 23 July 2020

Present:

Councillor

Representing

Wendy Schmitt (Chairman)	Braintree District Council
Maria Pearson	Brentwood Borough Council
Aidan McGurran	Basildon Borough Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Jeremy Lager	Chelmsford City Council
Mike Lilley	Colchester Borough Council
Malcolm Maddocks	Essex County Council
Michael Helm	Maldon District Council
Mike Webb	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 Members

Kay Odysseos
John Gili-Ross

Also in attendance

Gemma Bint	Democratic Services Officer
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Moir Bruin	Director of Operations
Victoria Freeman	Secretary to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel
Jane Gardner	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Deputy Commissioner
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 Chris Hossack, Brentwood Borough Council (substituted by Councillor Maria Pearson)
- Councillor Frances Mason, Harlow District Council

Due to technical issues, Councillor Joycelyn Redsell joined the meeting part way through Agenda Item 4.

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

The Chairman expressed her thanks to Kay Odysseos for her service as an Independent Member on the Panel over the past seven years and had personally written to her to relay her appreciation. Fellow members of the Panel took the opportunity to echo the comments of the Chairman and thanked Ms Odysseos for her invaluable contribution to the Panel and for her work outside of the Panel. The Commissioner addressed the Panel and expressed his gratitude to Ms Odysseos for her challenge and for bringing a different perspective to the Panel.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 4 June 2020 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman, subject to an amendment to include reference to the Commissioner's response to the re-commencement of Community Speed Watch following lock down.

3 Questions from members of the public

There were none.

4 Essex County Fire and Rescue Service End of Year Performance Report 2019-2020

The Panel received report EPFCP/15/20, which provided an overview of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's progress in delivering the priorities set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan 2019 – 2024 and the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2016-2020, based on data and other information for the year April 2019 to March 2020.

Introducing the item, the Commissioner explained that although there had been a decline in demand for the Service across Essex, demand remained relatively high compared with other Fire and Rescue Services nationally. He drew attention to certain areas that had shown improvement and

confirmed that efforts were being made to address those that had not done so. There had been continued progress in the cultural change process, with a small improvement being seen in the diversity of the workforce and the extent to which it reflected the local community. There continued to be challenges with attendance time, total pumping appliance availability, home safety visits and sickness absence. In response to a request from a Member, the Commissioner agreed to present, in context, the long term sickness data.

Members asked some questions about the report, relating to a number of issues, including the delivery of road safety activities and events during Covid-19; sickness absence and in particular mental health; on-call availability; the impact of electric cars and reduction in road traffic accidents involving pedestrians; workforce diversity; special services; complaints; the Thematic Inspection Programme and the percentage of incidents attended within 15 minutes.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that during Covid-19 a number of road safety activities were withdrawn and although public facing work was not currently possible, the time had been utilised to ensure the infrastructure was in place; a Community Speed Watch Co-ordinator and Road Traffic Collision Reduction Officer had been appointed; training was up to date; risk assessments completed; permission had been received from the Ministry of Defence for the Fire Bike Team to have access to the Weatherfield site and the virtual reality Rider Safety Course had been launched. The provision of consistent advice on fire safety to businesses that operated premises in different counties across the UK was welcomed by Members.

The Commissioner provided an update on Community Speed Watch, during which he was optimistic that this would return to normal, however in the meantime gradual steps would be needed to ensure social distancing is maintained, and there was a recognition of the impact of high visibility roadside presence on reducing speed.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation as contained within the report. It was noted that Cllr Redsell refrained from voting on the item as she was not present for the duration of the item.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

5 Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020-2024

The Panel received report EPFCP/16/20, which provided the Panel with the final version of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2020-2024.

Councillor Maddocks, Chair of the Integrated Risk Management Plan Sub-Group addressed the Panel, during which he brought attention to some recommendations not having been incorporated, following which he thanked Members and officers for their co-productive working.

Members requested that they receive a hard copy of the Plan when available.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel noted the IRMP, along with the contribution of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel Sub-Group formed to work with the Commissioner's office in developing the IRMP.

6 2021/22 Budget Setting Process

The Panel received report EPFCP/17/20, which provided the panel with an outline of the 2021/22 budget setting process for the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (PFCCFRA) and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) for Essex (Essex Police).

The Commissioner introduced the report, following which Members thanked him for the invitation to participate in the budget process and requested that once established, that the Budget Working Group provide regular updates to the Panel.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendations as contained within the report, with an amendment to replace references of 'Sub-Committee' to 'Working Group'.

RESOLVED: That

i) The Panel noted the report and considered the PFCC's invitation to participate in the process through the creation of a 2021/22 Budget Working Group.

ii) The Panel accepted the PFCC's invitation as set out above, appropriate dates for the working group meetings would be considered by the PFCC and the Panel Chair.

7 Essex PFCC Grant Claim and Outturn Report - 2019/20

The Panel received report EPFCP/28/20, which provided an update on the outturn position against the grant to be filed with the Home Office prior to the deadline of 31 July 2020.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

8 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Annual Report 2019-20

The Panel received report EPFCP/19/20, which provided an overview of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel's activities during the 2019/20 municipal year.

In reference to paragraph 3.1 of the report, it was noted that in July 2012, a shadow Panel was formed with the Essex Police and Crime Panel subsequently being established in 2013.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

9 PFCC Decisions

The Panel received report EPFCP/20/20, 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.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

10 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.

Response to Covid-19: The Commissioner took the opportunity to thank officers and staff for their exceptional service. During Covid-19, neither Safe and Well visits or home visits had been possible, however the Fire and Rescue Service had assisted other services during this time. Although the night-time economy had reduced, sexual abuse, sexual violence and

child exploitation had continued unabated. There had been an Adopt, Adapt, Abandon approach and a focus on preparation in case of a resurgence in the virus over the coming months.

Tilbury Grain Fire: Was a significant threat which was dealt with exceptionally well by the Fire Service who used inventive techniques to control the fires.

Operation Venetic: There had been in excess of 700 arrests nationally in relation to the encrypted telephone based drug gang.

The Essex Restoration and Mediation Service Annual Report: Members were asked to view the 2019/20 annual report that had recently been published.

In response to questioning, Members were reassured that there was a serious commitment to road policing and the Rural Engagement Team; and received an update on the special home funding bid in relation to the Tilbury incident.

11 National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panel Survey Report

The Panel received the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels survey report and findings dated 28 June 2020.

Mr Gili-Ross informed the Panel that twenty Panels had responded to the survey and their responses would be used to drive the work programme of the National Association. During his presentation, Mr Gili-Ross highlighted the themes which were Commissioner related.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

Cllr McGurran left the meeting at this point.

12 National Association of Police Fire and Crime Panel 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.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal report was noted.

13 Forward Look

The Panel received report EPFCP/22/20, setting out the business proposed to be taken to meetings up to December 2020.

The Panel received an update on the timeframe in respect of a Confirmation Hearing.

The Panel requested that a review of ENS be included in the forward look. If Members were minded, a report on the impact of complaints in the PFCCs Office could be presented at the end of Quarter 4 / beginning of Quarter 1.

It was requested that the Budget working group meet to discuss the budget process.

The Panel **noted** the report.

14 Dates of Future Meetings

The Panel received report EPFCP/23/20, setting out the proposed Panel meeting dates for 2020.

The Panel **noted** the report.

15 Dates of the next meetings

The Panel will next meet at 2.00pm on Thursday, 22 October 2020. There will be a pre-meeting for Panel Members only, commencing at 12.30pm.

16 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 16:32 pm.

Chairman
22 October 2020