

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1 at County Hall, Chelmsford on Thursday 20 July 2023

Present:**Councillor**

Anthony Hedley
Mary Cunningham
Donna Eley
Michael Lilley
Ross Playle
Mike Garnett
Simon Burwood
James Courtenay
Gary Collins
Maggie Sutton
Aidan McGurran

Representing

Basildon Borough Council
Braintree District Council
Chelmsford City Council
Colchester City Council
Essex County Council
Harlow District Council
Maldon District Council
Southend-on-Sea City Council
Thurrock Council
Uttlesford District Council
Co-opted Member for Balanced Appointment

Co-opted Independent Members

John Gili-Ross (Chairman)

Also in attendance

Gemma Bint	Democratic Services Officer
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC)
Moira Bruin	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Sophie Campion	Senior Democratic Services Officer, Secretary to the Panel
Jane Gardner	Deputy Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)
Andy Prophet	Deputy Chief Constable
Emma Tombs	Democratic Services Manager

1 Membership, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

The report of the Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received.

1. The membership of the Panel was noted, including a change to the membership which had taken place since the last meeting:
 - Cllr Barry Aspinell had been appointed by Brentwood Borough Council to replace Cllr Keith Barber.
2. The following apologies were noted:
 - Cllr Gina Placey, Tendring District Council
 - Cllr Lisa Newport, Rochford District Council
 - Cllr Barry Aspinell, Brentwood Borough Council
 - Cllr Smutri Patel, Epping Forest District Council
 - Sheila Murphy, Co-opted independent member

3. The following declarations were made by Members:
 - For the purposes of transparency Councillor Simon Burwood advised that his daughter was currently a serving Essex police officer. Councillor Burwood participated fully in the meeting.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Questions to the Chairman from members of the Public

There were none.

4 Balanced Appointment Objective Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/17/23 to review the composition of the Panel following the appointment of members by the constituent councils for the municipal year 2023-24.

Resolved:

- That officers request one nomination each from the Essex Labour Group and the Essex Conservative Group.
- That a further report to the Panel be made as soon as these nominations have been received so the nominees identified can be co-opted to the Panel.

5 Fire and Rescue Plan Performance Measures – Quarter 4 2022/23

The Panel received report EPFCP/18/23 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 2020 – 2024 during Quarter 4 of 2022/23.

The Commissioner introduced the report, drawing attention to some of the highlights including the success of the dynamic deployment approach, the number of road and water safety events held and the fall in staff sickness. The Commissioner also highlighted the areas for continued focus which included global availability across the county, the increase in the number of road traffic collisions attended and the slight increase in staff turnover.

During the discussion, the Panel asked questions and sought clarification on the following issues:

- The issues relating to fires from e-vehicles and how they were dealt with were explained, including the hazards linked to charging them. It was explained that currently the recording of incidents did not separate electric vehicles from others, but as this was an area of public interest as an emerging risk, there were likely to be changes in reporting nationally.

- The Commissioner advised that the road and water safety events that had been held were targeted towards particular at risk sites and targeted audiences. They had been well attended within the targeted groups. Some of the Vision Zero days of action were purposefully not pre-announced.
- In terms of queries relating to Speedwatch, it was explained that Speedwatch had been brought under the Safer Essex Roads Partnership, it was hosted by the Fire and Rescue Service, with input from other organisations. The responsibility was shared between the organisations to sign off approved areas and training.
- It was confirmed that in relation to questions around the use of Tru-Cam speed cameras, that enforcement was a policing power which the Chief Constable could delegate to individuals that were community safety accredited. There was a distinction between volunteers undertaking exercises to educate the public and trained individuals undertaking the enforcement aspects.
- With respect to the success of the work of the Tri-services officer in Maldon and whether this was being rolled out to other areas, the Commissioner explained that it had worked well in that area and a similar model was being rolled out in Uttlesford. This would be a step by step process and worked best in rural areas where 'safe and well' visits and prevention work could be targeted to more isolated areas.
- The Commissioner clarified that, in response to a previous suggestion by the Panel regarding the highlighting of current pilot schemes, material pilot programs would be flagged to the Panel via the decisions report on a case by case basis.
- It was confirmed that injuries sustained whilst on duty were reported and monitored appropriately. Any accidents on duty that occurred were scrutinised via the Health and Safety department and where applicable reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Learning was taken from the incident report and due care and attention given to ensure that it did not happen again.
- The way in which Freedom of Information requests were dealt with was explained to the Panel and it was confirmed that all responses were published on the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service website after they had been sent to the person making the request.
- The reasons for the low performance figure relating to coverage at Braintree station were outlined. This was mainly due to a number of fire fighters leaving at the same time and it had taken time to recruit to those posts and the subsequent up-skilling and training of those individuals to become fully competent in the specific roles. On-call liaison officers had been moved to Braintree to assist in the interim period. Despite the availability at that particular station being affected, there were contingencies in place for responding to incidents in that area.
- In respect of complaints received, the most common factor was around the driving of the tenders, other areas included recruitment, false alarms and occasionally door to door visits.
- In response to a question regarding what contingencies were in place to respond to any sudden increases in fires due to hot weather, it was

reported that the service had coped extremely well the previous year with the challenging number of fires due to the hot weather. The service had not had to declare a critical incident, and it was considered to have been well managed with the support and effort from the fire fighters and management team. There had been learning from the last year which enabled the service to better prepare for future issues and the Commissioner outlined the various resources, training and welfare equipment which had been put in place as a result of that learning.

- A question was raised regarding a recent incident involving a tender at the Orsett Fire Station catching fire and the effects of that on the service. In response it was explained that the area would be covered through the dynamic deployment structure. The crew were operating out of Grays station with a replacement tender, while the Orsett station damage was made good. There were business continuity plans in place for each station if the station or tender became unavailable and those plans had been invoked to ensure there was no interruption in service in that area.
- With regard to staff sickness rates, it was acknowledged that the pattern compared to the previous year was not a usual pattern and whilst there wasn't a detailed explanation available, it was noted that it was plausible that this could be related to Covid related sickness reporting the previous year which had not been an issue this year.
- With reference to page 24 of the agenda pack and station coverage being lower than the target, it was explained that the amber arrows generally showed that the percentage movement was within the usual tolerance level. Most of the targets were aspirational and where the service would like to be, as opposed to an average. If there were concerns regarding coverage this would be managed through the dynamic deployment structure.
- The Commissioner outlined what was being done to deal with the increase in unwanted fire signals, in particular working with premises which had repeated issues.
- It was explained that the issues relating to some types of portable barbeques had been raised nationally.

The Commissioner agreed to give consideration to the following issues:

- Clarity to be provided regarding Speedwatch volunteer involvement in educating people within 20mph limits and zones, approved areas and training, via a reminder in the Community Speed Watch monthly report.
- Whether information from the Performance Report, such as page 23 of the agenda pack, could be provided in a format that the service would be happy for it to be circulated to local residents.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

6 Review of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Constitution

The Panel received report EPFCP/19/23 inviting comments from the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the contents of the Commissioner's updated Constitution prior to its adoption.

The Commissioner explained that this was the biennial review of the PFCC Constitution. The changes had been summarised and mainly related to new legislation, guidance issued relating to governance and scrutiny and changes to terms of reference.

The Panel had highlighted a few minor administrative issues for consideration in finalising the constitution, but did not have any recommendations with regard to any material issues. The Commissioner confirmed that references to the European Parliament remained in the constitution as the law had not yet been changed. He had also noted a point made regarding the referencing of unitary councils, which were not currently listed in the legislation, and confirmed that he would raise this at a national level.

Resolved:

That following review of the proposed updated Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Constitution, there were no recommendations on its content and the updated Constitution was noted.

7 Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Decisions Reports

The Panel received report EPFCP/20/23 which provided information about financial and strategic decisions made by the PFCC.

The Commissioner drew the Panel's attention to a new section in the appendices of the decision report headed 'Decisions previously reported and published since the last meeting of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel'. In future, decisions would be listed here that had still been confidential when they were originally reported to the Panel, but which had since been published.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

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

The Commissioner provided the Panel with a verbal update on ongoing issues including;

- Achievement of the target for the Police growth programme, backed by the Police uplift programme
- Police Pay Award

- Annual Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Conference held in June 2023
- Launch of the Anti-Social Behaviour Hotspot pilots
- Fire and Rescue Service new control system
- Grant launches including; the Safer Streets Fund and Violence and Vulnerability community grants

An ongoing issue which had been raised and discussed at the last few meetings of the Panel was Road Safety and the prevention work being done to bring down the number of killed and seriously injured on Essex roads. In relation to that, the Chairman reported that he had recently attended an event in his capacity as Chairman of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels. The event related to a particular road safety campaign and some learning which had resulted from an incident involving young drivers. The Commissioner was asked whether he would consider how learning from campaigns such as this could feed into the prevention work on road safety.

It was noted that there had been some opportunities in the past for Panel Members to undertake site visits to help develop their understanding of the services, particularly in relation to understanding how aspects of the Commissioner's priorities were being delivered. Visits had included the Police Control Room and Resolution Centre and the Chairman had recently visited the National Police Air Services base in Essex. The Panel welcomed future opportunities to undertake further visits.

The Commissioner agreed to give consideration to the following issues:

- An opportunity for Panel Members to visit the control room for the Fire and Rescue Service, as had previously been done for the Police control room.
- Providing the Panel with more information on the Anti-Social Behaviour Hotspot pilot areas and consider opportunities for Panel Members to visit the areas.
- How to bring to the attention of the Safer Essex Roads Partnership, the learning from road safety campaigns that could feed into future work to enhance the safety of Essex roads.

Resolved:

That the verbal report was noted.

9 National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels Update

The Panel received a verbal update from the Chairman of the Panel, which included an update on a vacancy in the Executive Committee and a meeting with the Home Office.

Resolved:

That the verbal report was noted.

10 Forward Work Plan

The Panel received report EPFCP/21/23 setting out the planned business of the Panel.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the Forward Work Plan.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 28 September 2023 at 2:00pm.

There being no urgent business, the meeting closed at 4:02pm.