

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel: Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee, held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, on Wednesday, 20 September 2023 at 2:00pm.

Present

John Gili-Ross
Cllr Simon Burwood
Cllr James Courtenay
Cllr Michael Garnett

Representing

Co-opted Independent Member (Chairman)
Maldon District Council (Substitute)
Southend-on-Sea City Council (Substitute)
Harlow District Council

Also in attendance

Gemma Bint	Democratic Services Officer
Colette Black	Director of People Services, ECFRS
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC)
Sophie Campion	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Scott Cannon	Detective Superintendent, Essex Police
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Claire Talbot	Chief Superintendent, Essex Police

1. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

1. The membership of the Sub-Committee was noted.
2. Apologies were received from Cllr Gary Collins, Thurrock Council and Sheila Murphy, Co-opted Independent Member. Cllr Simon Burwood, Maldon District Council and Cllr James Courtenay, Southend-on-Sea City Council were in attendance as substitutes.
3. The following declarations were made by Members:
For the purposes of transparency Cllr Simon Burwood advised that his daughter was currently a serving Essex police officer. Cllr Burwood participated fully in the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. HMICFRS Reports into the Effectiveness of Vetting and Counter-Corruption Arrangements

The Sub-Committee received report EISC/02/23 from Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, which set out the findings of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection into the effectiveness of Essex Police's vetting, IT monitoring and Counter-Corruption arrangements, which took place in November 2022.

The report also updated members of the sub-committee on the force's progress in implementing the 43 national recommendations and areas for improvement (AFIs) identified within HMICFRS's national thematic inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service, which were reported to the sub-committee in November 2022.

The Commissioner introduced the report and it was noted that there was a level of national media interest in these topics due to issues nationally in other organisations. Chief officers were ensuring professionalism within the service and a level of confidence. Progress against the 43 national recommendations gave good assurance from Essex Police.

In response to questions from Members the following points were made:

- It was confirmed that the one member of staff identified during the Historical Data Wash process as having failed to disclose intelligence recorded against them when vetted, was subject to a live investigation into gross misconduct.
- An explanation was provided regarding how misconduct hearings were currently structured with a Legally Qualified Chair. It was explained that representations had been made to the Government regarding who had the final say on outcomes from these hearings and as a result the Government was expected to be making an announcement in due course on the future structure of hearings.
- In response to a question regarding Recommendation 29 and the use of Regulation 13 of the Police Regulations 2003 for underperforming officers during their probationary period, it was explained that this had been used 75 times in the past year. Following the recruitment drive, it had become apparent during training that some of the recruits were not suitable for policing. In other cases of underperformance, where appropriate, recruits were given the assistance they required to improve their performance.
- Clarity was provided regarding the IT monitoring where intelligence suggested a higher risk of sexual misconduct or corruption was posed. It was confirmed that evidence would be needed in order to suspend an officer. The monitoring was carried out on work mobile phones which belonged to the service. The circumstances in which personal phones may be monitored included examples where it was related to criminal investigations or if a personal phone number appeared as part of an organised crime investigation.
- It was confirmed that positive discrimination was not used in recruitment to the Service. During recruitment campaigns, there was positive action to reach out to different communities and to ensure there were no barriers to anyone joining from particular groups within the community.
- It was clarified that the recommendation numbers that were missing from the report was due to the recommendation being for a different organisation such the Police Chiefs Council or College of Policing, rather than for the individual Service.
- Clarification was also provided on the status of the recommendations, with Green having been signed off as compliant by the HMICFRS and Amber

showing that the Service was working towards full compliance. There were no areas of concern in terms of becoming fully compliant.

RESOLVED:

That members of the Sub-Committee noted the report.

4. Professionalism, Trust and Confidence in Essex Police

The Commissioner introduced the report and explained that this was about the key findings of Baroness Casey's independent review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Whilst this report was not about Essex Police, the Chief Constable had chosen to look at the findings and reflect on the implications for Essex and how the Service may respond to that.

The report set out the findings of the work that had been undertaken by Essex Police, including identifying areas of strength, areas for improvement and future risks, challenges and opportunities. Five key recurring themes were identified. The Commissioner's Senior Management Team had agreed a number of actions arising from the learning including, continuing to scrutinise progress against the Professionalism Strategy, results of surveys and Human Resources information.

In response to questions from Members the following points were made:

- A question was raised relating to how the Service was communicating with the public, in light of national criticisms of some police services. It was explained that there were communications about what Essex Police were doing, ensuring visibility, highlighting successes through social media and public engagement opportunities. The key message being put across was that the Service was there for everyone, providing more support and reducing crime.
- In terms of public sessions with Essex Police, it was explained that there were various engagement opportunities including with the Rural Engagement Team, Community Policing, engagement with local groups, libraries, Council meetings and newsletters etc. There was a Community Engagement Lead for the Service which included liaison with universities, schools, churches and Faith groups. It was stated that crime was going down and solved rates were improving.
- Members suggested that some events were not as well advertised as they could have been, but some of the local social media feeds were interesting and useful.

RESOLVED:

That members of the Sub-Committee noted the report.

5. Essex County Fire and Rescue Service People Strategy Update

The Commissioner introduced the report, providing the background to the cultural review of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS), following the Lucas Report.

The pillars within the People Strategy were in place to support cultural change and progress against those pillars continued to be on track to complete on schedule. Recent relevant external reports on the Police and Fire and Rescue Services had been reviewed and learning from those reports had to led to the creation of the 'Safer Together' approach with progress monitored under the Culture and Values pillar.

An inspection of ECFRS by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) was currently underway.

In response to questions from Members the following points were made:

- It was noted that Appendix 1 to the report, the HMICFRS report on Values and culture in fire and rescue services, was a national report across all 44 fire and rescue services in England and was not specifically focussed on Essex. However it was confirmed that of the 35 actions within this report which had been adopted in full by ECFRS, the latest progress report was attached as Appendix 2 to the report. It was confirmed that the recommendations were all achievable.
- Assurance was provided that the actions against the six pillars were all on track to be delivered. Mitigations had been put in place to ensure that those areas where there had been concern or delays were brought back on track.

The Sub-Committee gave feedback on the format and flow of the report and suggested that consideration be given to focussing on the elements relating to Essex first and to summarising or referring to the national elements further down.

RESOLVED:

That members of the Sub-Committee noted the report.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The date and time of the next meeting was to be arranged in March 2023.

7. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business. The Chairman and Members of the Sub-Committee thanked the report authors for the comprehensive reports. The meeting closed at 3:30pm.