

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1 at County Hall, Chelmsford on Thursday 15 June 2023

Present:

Councillor

Councillor K Barber
Councillor R Savage
Councillor D Eley
Councillor R Playle
Councillor M Garnett
Councillor S Burwood
Councillor G Collins
Councillor M Sutton
Councillor A McGurran

Representing

Brentwood Borough Council
Castle Point Borough Council
Chelmsford City Council
Essex County Council
Harlow District Council
Maldon District Council
Thurrock Council
Uttlesford District Council
Co-opted Member for Balanced Appointment

Co-opted Independent Members

John Gili-Ross (Chairman)
Sheila Murphy

Also in attendance

Gemma Bint	Democratic Services Officer
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC)
Sophie Campion	Senior Democratic Services Officer, Secretary to the Panel
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)
Janet Perry	Chief Financial Officer, OPFCC
Emma Tombs	Democratic Services Manager

1 Election of Chairman

Having been proposed by Councillor Garnett and seconded by Councillor Savage and there being no other nominations, it was

Resolved:

That John Gili-Ross be duly elected as Chairman of the Panel.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Having been proposed by John Gili-Ross and seconded by Councillor Barber and there being no other nominations, it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Ross Playle be duly appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Panel.

3 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

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

1. The membership of the Panel was noted, including that since the agenda pack had been published, the following two changes to membership had taken place:
 - Cllr Mary Cunningham has been appointed by Braintree DC to replace Cllr Frankie Ricci.
 - Cllr Simon Burwood has been appointed by Maldon DC to fill the vacancy.
2. The following apologies were noted:
 - Cllr Anthony Hedley, Basildon District Council
 - Cllr James Courtenay, Southend City Council
 - Cllr Jude Deakin, Co-opted Member
 - Cllr Mary Cunningham, Braintree District Council
 - Cllr Gina Placey, Tendring District Council
 - Cllr Smutri Patel, Epping Forest District Council
 - Cllr Mike Lilley, Colchester City Council
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.

4 Balanced Appointment Objective Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/09/23 setting out the requirement for the Panel to meet the balanced appointment objective.

Resolved:

That a further report to the Panel be brought to the July meeting, once the nominations had all been made and the political balance had been reviewed.

5 Minutes

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

6 Questions to the Chairman from members of the public

There were none.

7 Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/10/22, setting out the Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules for the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee as agreed at a meeting of the Panel held on 23 June 2022 and providing the minutes from the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee meeting held on 21 March 2023.

Resolved:

1. That the following four members of the Panel be appointed to the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee, along with two substitute members for the Sub-Committee –
 - Councillor Gary Collins
 - Councillor Mike Garnett
 - John Gili-Ross
 - Sheila Murphy
 - Councillor Simon Burwood (Substitute)
 - Councillor James Courtenay (Substitute)
2. That the Panel noted the minutes of the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee

8 Complaints Sub-Committee

The Panel received report EPFCP/11/23 setting out the need to identify those members of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel who will form the membership 'pool' from which individuals will be drawn to hear matters put before the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee.

Resolved:

That the following Panel Members be nominated to a pool of members for 2022-23 from which membership of the Complaints Sub-Committee will be drawn as and when a meeting is convened –

- Councillor Simon Burwood
- Councillor James Courtenay
- Councillor Mike Garnett
- John Gili-Ross
- Sheila Murphy
- Councillor Ross Playle
- Councillor Russ Savage

9 Police and Crime Plan Performance Measures - Quarter 4 2022/23

The Panel received report EPFCP/12/23 which provided an overview of Essex Police's progress in delivering the priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan, based on data and other information to the end of March 2023.

The Commissioner introduced the report and explained that this was set out in a new format with more data and trend analysis. He drew the Panel's attention to a number of highlights including completion of the Police Uplift Plan, progress in dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour, areas where more resources had been deployed, areas that had seen a downward trend and where there had been increases in solved rates and convictions. The Commissioner also highlighted the areas for continued focus which included public confidence in Essex Police, the areas of rural and business crime, the number of killed and seriously injured on the roads and specific recruitment campaigns.

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

- A number of questions were raised in relation to the fall in overall confidence in Essex Police. It was explained that confidence in Police had increased during the pandemic due to more visibility and reductions in crime, but had started to fall again since then and this needed to be addressed. Local, visible policing and a focus on hotspots was key along with a focus on victim support and keeping victims informed. It was acknowledged that nationally issues with other police services could also have an impact on overall confidence in the Police.
- In relation to the reference in the report to an increase in the solved rates of hate crime, clarification was sought on the definition of hate crimes and hate speech.
- Confirmation was sought on how confident the Commissioner was that the downward trend in domestic abuse was a longer-term trend rather than less cases being reported. In response the Commissioner confirmed that investment had been made in better reporting and effective ways of victims getting in contact. The HMICFRS had rated the data accuracy as outstanding. There were cross checking processes in place to ensure that the reported crime and trends tallied with the independent surveys.
- A question was raised in relation to the reported decline in Anti-Social Behaviour, which was not felt to be the case in Castle Point. It was acknowledged that the reduction in Castle Point was significantly less of a reduction than in other areas. As this was an operational area it would be looked at outside of the Panel meeting.
- With regard to the conviction rates on sexual offences, it was reported that there had been some success in convictions. It was noted that in cases of rape there were issues around disputed cases of consent which was hard to prove. There was success in solving violent stranger rapes and homicides in the county. There was a lot of work being done to improve the support to victims including rapid response video approach. More work was needed in the prevention of rape and serious sexual assault and this was a national issue.
- In response to a query regarding what pilots were being run, the timescales and expected outcomes, particularly in relation to the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB), it was suggested that a workshop session could be arranged to give an overview of the work of the SETDAB and in particular the pilot programs that were being run. An overview of the new pilots set out in the report

was given and the timescales were confirmed as running from the summer to March 2025.

- Information on the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) hotspot pilot was given, including how they were selected. There were 11 pilots running over 9 Community Safety Partnership (CSPs) areas. The details would be circulated to the Panel. If the pilot was successful it would then be the intention to roll it out nationally the following year which would give the opportunity to expand to other areas. The learning would be shared across all areas. The approach included working with partner agencies and CSPs. This was governed and overseen by Safer Essex.
- It was confirmed that with regard to the recruitment and retention of Specials, reasons for leaving were collected, many had gone on to be recruited as regulars. In the current economic climate it had been harder for people to give so many hours due to people having to work overtime and the recruitment market being active.
- The breakdown of the Killed and Seriously injured figures was given for the year. The Panel challenged whether the focus was in the right place regarding where accidents took place on the major or minor road networks. It was confirmed that the efforts were concentrated on the road areas where the accidents and harm were actually occurring. The Chairman advised that he had been invited to a Parliamentary event as the Chairman of the National Association of Police Fire and Crime Panels (NAPFCP) relating to young driver behaviour and would provide informal feedback to Panel Members.
- In terms of reducing drug-driven violence, the different ways of reporting crime, particularly anonymously were outlined. It was acknowledged that Fentanyl use posed a significant threat and the Commissioner outlined that work was being done to try and stop this being on the streets in Essex, working with the National Crime Agency.
- It was confirmed that Essex Police had a detailed operational procedure around pursuit of people on two-wheeled vehicles which would include e-scooters, e-bikes, bicycles and motorbikes, due to the risks involved.
- Clarification was sought on the references in the report to the increase in crime linked to individuals from Western Balkan countries and the impact in Essex. It was reported that the number of arrests in Essex was very low. There were Albanian organised criminal gangs in Essex linked to cannabis production. Agencies worked together to gather intelligence and intervene; 20 warrants had been conducted linked to that national effort.

The Commissioner agreed to give consideration to the following issues:

- Reporting back to the Panel on any material pilot programs
- Providing an update and information to the Panel on the ASB hotspot pilot
- Adding any Panel Members who requested it to the distribution list for receipt of the Newsletter that goes to Safer Essex.

Resolved:

1. That the Panel received and noted the report.

2. That the Panel add an item to the Forward Work Plan to receive via a workshop session, an overview of the work of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board, in particular the pilot programs that were being run, in relation to Priority 3 – Protecting vulnerable people and breaking the cycle of domestic abuse, of the Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024.

10 The 2024/25 Budget Setting Process

The Panel received report EPFCP/13/23 which provided the Panel with an outline of the 2024/25 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 and advised that in previous years the Budget Setting Working Group had been invaluable to the Budget Setting process and invited the Panel to establish a working group for this period.

Resolved:

1. That the Panel received and noted the report and accepted the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's invitation to participate in this process through the creation of a 2024/25 Budget Setting Working Group of the Panel, in line with the process established for 2023/24 budget setting.
2. That the membership and dates of the Working Group would be confirmed after the meeting.

11 Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Decisions Reports

The Panel received and raised questions on report EPFCP/14/23 which provided information about financial and strategic decisions made by the PFCC.

The Panel sought further clarification on the following decisions:

Appendix A – Police Decisions

- Ref 042 & 046 - Sale of Former Police houses
- Ref 014 - Marine Unit Launch
- Ref 019 - Recovery of stray, loose or abandoned horses
- Ref 008 - Provision of Policing Services at Stansted Airport
- Ref 009 - ERSOU Capital Contribution

Appendix B – Fire and Rescue Decisions

- Ref 016 Schedule Replacement of pumping appliances

In response to a number of queries raised on decisions which were marked as commercially sensitive with no financial information, the Commissioner agreed to look at the best way of reporting back on final figures when a decision has been completed and the information is available.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

12 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:

- The national recruitment target update
- Knife Crime Awareness Week
- Anti-Social Behaviour Hotspot pilots
- New Victims and Prisoners Bill
- Implementing the recommendations from the Casey Review
- HMICFRS report on the State of Policing
- HMICFRS report on values and culture in the Fire and Rescue Services
- Minerva Project funding relating to data mapping hotspots
- Annual PFCC Conference

Resolved:

That the verbal report was noted.

13 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Annual Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/15/23 which provided an overview of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel's activities during the 2022/23 municipal year and also set out the Forward Work Plan for 2023/24.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial to arrange further future visits to the Force Control Room and other operational areas such as the Marine Unit to assist in Panel Members' understanding of how the services function as part of Panel Member development and training.

It was noted that there was an omission from the annual report regarding Panel Members' attendance at the Joint Emergency Services Training event in April 2023 which had been very insightful.

Resolved:

1. That the Panel received and noted the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Annual Report for 2022/23.
2. That the Panel reviewed the Forward Work Plan and agreed the addition of two items;
 - A workshop providing an overview of the work of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board.
 - A report on the biennial review of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Constitution

14 Essex PFCP Grant Claim and Outturn Report - 2022/23

The Panel received report EPFCP/16/23 updating the Panel on the outturn position against the grant that was filed with the Home Office prior to the deadline of 3 March 2023. The return had been signed off by the accountable body's accountant and reflected the actual and forecast expenditure incurred in the administration of the Panel.

Resolved:

That the report was noted.

15 National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels (NAPFCP) update

The Panel received a verbal update from the Chairman of the Panel on the purpose, structure and current workstreams of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels. The Chairman advised that he would feed back on the outcomes from the parliamentary session relating to young driver behaviour.

Resolved:

That the verbal report was noted.

16 Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 20 July 2023.

There being no urgent business, the meeting closed at 4.24pm.