

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held virtually on
Thursday, 4 February 2021

Present:

Councillor

Representing

Wendy Schmitt	Braintree District Council (Chairman)
Keith Parker	Brentwood Borough Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Jeremy Lager	Chelmsford City Council
Michael Lilley	Colchester Borough Council
Holly Whitbread	Epping Forest District Council
Malcolm Maddocks	Essex County Council
Chris Vince	Harlow District Council
Mark Heard	Maldon District Council
Lesley Butcher	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

John Gili-Ross
Sheila Murphy

Also in attendance

Julia Berry	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Head of Finance
Joanna Boaler	Head of Democracy and Transparency, Essex County Council
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Moira Bruin	Director of Corporate Services, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Annette Chan	Chief Accountant, Essex Police
Neil Cross	Chief Finance Officer, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Victoria Freeman	Secretary to the Panel
Jane Gardner	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Ben-Julian Harrington	Chief Constable, Essex Police
Elizabeth Helm	Interim Head of Finance, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Darren Horsman	Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Debbie Martin	Chief Finance Officer of the Chief Constable (Section 151 Officer)
Janet Perry	Strategic Head of Performance and Resources

Jo Turton

Chief Fire Officer, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

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 Keith Parker)
- Councillor Aidan McGurran, Basildon Borough Council
- Councillor Michael Webb, Rochford District Council (substituted by Councillor Lesley Butcher)

2. The following declarations were made by Members:

- Councillor Lynda McWilliams declared a Code Interest in that her son is a police officer. Councillor McWilliams participated fully in the meeting.
- Councillor Mark Heard declared a Code Interest in that his son is a police officer. Councillor Heard participated fully in the meeting.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the Confirmation Hearing held on the 10 December 2020 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 10 December 2020 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

4 Questions from members of the public

A member of the public had submitted questions to the Chairman, however they had indicated that they were unable to attend the meeting and would therefore be provided with a written response.

5 Essex County Fire and Rescue Performance Measures – Quarter 2 2020-21

The Panel received report EPFCP/01/21 which provided an overview of 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 2020 – 2024, based on data and other information to September 2020.

Introducing the item, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner drew attention to certain areas that had shown improvement and confirmed that efforts were being made to address those that had not done so.

Members asked questions about the report, relating to a number of issues, including the recent media coverage on attacks on service personnel and action taken to ensure the prosecution of these offenders, the gender divide, and the promotion of the service within schools.

Members took the opportunity to thank the Fires and Rescue Service for its work during the recent flooding.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

6 Police Complaints Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/02/21 which provided an overview of the PFCC's activities during 2020 in relation to their responsibilities for complaint handling.

The Commissioner introduced the report, and welcomed Members suggestion of a workshop to discuss the content of future Complaint reports to ensure the effectiveness and transparency of the information sought by the Panel.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

7 PFCC Decisions Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/03/21 that provided information on financial and strategic decisions made by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner since the last Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel meeting submission deadline.

The Panel reviewed the information provided and sought further information on the highway gates at High Beech.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

8 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: Essex Police continued to take the approach of engaging, explaining, encouraging compliance, and exercising

enforceable powers. Although the vast majority of residents were complying with safety measures, some residents were less abiding and fixed penalty notices had been issued. When COVID-19 infringements were removed from data, anti-social behaviour had continued to fall. Sickness levels across the services were higher than usual but remained within manageable levels. In response to questioning, the Panel was reassured that there was significant provision of support available to staff, ranging from mental health support to financial support, and additional support was available from the Firefighters Charity and the Police Benevolent Fund.

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (MICFRS) Report – The Inspectorate had praised the Fire and Rescue Service, reporting that the service was well prepared, supported its partners well, maintained its core services and put the welfare of its staff at the heart of decision making and activities. The Commissioner took the opportunity to congratulate the performance of the service.
- Restorative Justice – The Restorative Justice team had successfully undertaken its first COVID-19 mediation; and the PFCC office were ensuring that the third sector voluntary community sector were receiving the resources to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. There was concern regarding the backlog of cases in the criminal justice system and the Criminal Justice Board met regularly to identify solutions. The capacity in the Magistrates Court was good and the Crown Courts in Essex had been exemplary against a challenging backdrop. The Traveller Movement had facilitated a training session with the Police Engagement Team and the travelling community, focused on domestic violence within the travelling community. Concern was raised in regard to the expiration of domestic violence injunctions during the pandemic and noted that Next Chapter had raised their concern via the Criminal Justice Board and discussions on expediting the process were underway.
- Community Safety Development Fund – Applications for the PFCC Community Safety Development Fund were encouraged.
- Force Growth Plan – The Force Growth Plan was on track and the force was commended by the Home Office on the progress made to date. 46 new police officers had been recruited in January 2021 and a cohort of special constables.
- New Year Queens Honours List – A number of Essex servicemen across both services had been honoured in Her Majesty's New Year Honours list.

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

Mr Gili-Ross provided an update on the activities of the NAPFCP, which included an update on the Executive Committee appointments, meetings with the Chair and Chief Officer of the Association of Police and Crime

Commissioners (APCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA), and had looked at the impact of remote working. Mr Gili-Ross reported that he had been invited to attend a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the delays in the Emergency Services Network (ESN) and the significant impact on police force budgetary constraints.

10 Forward Look

The Panel considered report EPFCP/04/21 by the Secretary to the Panel, setting out the business proposed to be taken to meetings up to December 2021.

The Panel noted the report.

11 Dates of Future Meetings

The Panel received report EPFCP/05/21, setting out the Panel meeting dates for 2020-21 and 2021-22.

The Panel noted the report.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting would take place at 2.00pm on Thursday, 3 June 2021, and that this would be preceded by a private pre-meeting for Panel Members only, commencing at 12.30pm.

The meeting closed at 3.19 pm.

Chairman
17 June 2021