

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held virtually on Thursday, 10 December 2020

Present:

Councillor

Representing

Aidan McGurran	Basildon Borough Council
Wendy Schmitt	Braintree District Council (Chairman)
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Adam Fox	Colchester Borough Council
Holly Whitbread	Epping Forest District Council
Mark Heard	Maldon District Council
Leslie 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

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
Neil Cross	Chief Finance Officer, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
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
Rick Hylton	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Victoria Freeman	Secretary to the Panel
Emma Tombs	Democratic Services Manager

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
Councillor Jeremy Lager, Chelmsford City Council

Councillor Michael Lilley, Colchester Borough Council (substituted by Councillor Adam Fox)
Councillor Malcolm Maddocks, Essex County Council
Councillor Michael Webb, Rochford District Council (substituted by Councillor Lesley Butcher)

2. John Gili-Ross declared an interest in Agenda Item 9, PFCC Decisions, in respect of decision no. 131/20.

The Chairman announced that Councillor Frances Mason, representative on the Panel from Harlow District Council, had passed away and expressed her condolences to the late Councillor's family. The Commissioner and Councillor Issacs expressed their condolences, following which the Chairman invited those present to observe a period of silence.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 22 October 2020 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

3 Questions from members of the public

There were none.

4 Police and Crime Plan Performance Measures – Quarter 2 – 2020-21

The Panel received report EPFCP/30/20 which provided an overview of Essex Police's progress in delivering the priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan.

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 countryside speeding, Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews and cross-examination video recording prior to trials, Operation SHIELD II, partnership working in North LPA, Operation ERASURE, anti-social behaviour relating to unauthorised large gatherings during COVID-19 and enforcement during legal gatherings, support for domestic abuse victims and Community Speedwatch.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

5 2021/22 PFCC Budget Update

The Panel received report EPFCP/31/20 which provided an update on current progress against the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and the setting of the 2021/22 budget.

The Commissioner introduced the report, following which John Gili-Ross provided a brief update on the Budget Working Group to the Panel.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

6 2021/22 Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Budget Update

The Panel received report EPFCP/32/20 which provided a further update on progress in setting the 2021/22 budget.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

7 PFCCs Annual Report 2019/20

The Panel received report EPFCP/33/20 which provided the Panel with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's draft Annual Report for 2019-20.

The Commissioner introduced the report and highlighted that the production of an annual report was a statutory requirement.

The Panel reviewed the information and noted an error on page 87 of the report whereby the table represented '000's'.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

8 Essex PFCP Budget Half Year Outturn Report 2020/21

The Panel received report EPFCP/34/20 which updated Members on the Panel's outturn position for the period 1 April 2020 to September 2020 as filed with the Home Office prior to the deadline of 31 October 2020.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

9 PFCC Decisions Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/35/20 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 Decision 117/20 regarding the purchase of suitable chairs to enable staff to work from home effectively during the Coronavirus pandemic.

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: Operational policing continued as normal whilst complying with social distancing and secure measures; and there had been an increase in public confidence. The Fire and Rescue Service had been impacted where a crew member tested Covid-19 positive, resulting in self-isolation of the remaining crew members. There was low sickness levels across both services and above average availability across the Fire and Rescue Service.

PFCC Office: The PFCC Office had worked closely with government and secured £1m emergency Covid-19 funding since June from the Ministry of Justice. The funding had been used to support organisations to adapt their services. In addition, £430,000 had been secured for Independent Sexual Violence Advisors; and £430,000 for rape support in terms of allowing Synergy Essex to recruit an additional six advisors. Concern remained regarding the criminal justice system, although there was more capacity in the magistrate's courts there was not the capacity to reduce the backlog of Crown Court jury trials.

Home Office Review: The Home office was conducting a review of the strategic policing requirement and national and regional capabilities to respond.

Policing Minister Visit: The Policing Minister had visited Essex in November 2020, and had primarily focused on homicide reduction.

Restorative Justice Week: As part of Restorative Justice Week in November 2020, a webinar that focused on how Essex Police could support victims of domestic abuse, was held.

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

Mr Gili-Ross provided an update on the activities of the NAPFCP, which included the NAPFCP's Annual General Meeting and the Annual Police, Fire and Crime Panels Conference.

12 Budget Working Group Update

John Gili-Ross provided the Panel with an update under Item 5 of the agenda.

13 Forward Look

The Panel considered report EPFCP/36/20 by the Secretary to the Panel, setting out the business proposed to be taken to meetings up to February 2021.

The Panel noted the report.

14 Dates of Future Meetings

The Panel received report EPFCP/37/20, setting out the Panel meeting dates for 2020-21.

The Panel noted the report.

15 Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting would take place at 2.00pm on Thursday, 4 February 2020, and that this would be preceded by a private pre-meeting for Panel Members only, commencing at 12.30pm.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm.

Chairman
4 February 2020