
Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in the Chamber of County Hall, Chelmsford on Friday 29 October 2021

Present:

Councillor	Representing
Keith Barber	Brentwood Borough Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Jeremy Lager	Chelmsford City Council
Ross Playle	Essex County Council
Paul Stalker	Epping Forest District Council
Michael Garnett	Harlow District Council
Arthur Williams	Rochford District Council
Lynda McWilliams	Tendring District Council

Co-opted Independent Members

John Gili-Ross (Chairman)

Also in attendance

Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Julia Berry	Head of Finance and s151 Officer, Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex
Moira Bruin	Assistant Chief Fire Officer Prevention, Protection, Response
Neil Cross	Chief Finance Officer Section 151 Officer, ECFRS
Jane Gardner	Deputy Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Darren Horsman	Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement
Rick Hylton	Candidate
Janet Perry	Strategic Head of Performance and Resources, Essex PFCC
Andy Prophet	Deputy Chief Constable
Emma Tombs	Democratic Services Manager
Jasmine Carswell	Democratic Services Officer

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

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

1. The membership of the Panel was noted.
2. The panel welcomed three new members:
 - Councillor Barber, Brentwood BC
 - Councillor Oxford, Colchester BC
 - Councillor Stalker, Epping Forest DC
3. The following apologies were noted:
 - Councillor Andrew Baggott, Basildon Borough Council
 - Councillor Frankie Ricci, Braintree District Council
 - Councillor Mark Heard, Maldon District Council
 - Councillor Ian Shead, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
 - Councillor Gary Collins, Thurrock Council
 - Councillor Day, Uttlesford District Council
 - Councillor Oxford, Colchester Borough Council
 - Sheila Murphy
4. 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.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings (AGM and Confirmation Hearing) held on the 17 June 2021 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. Essex County Fire and Rescue Service End of Year Performance Report 2020-21

The Panel received report EPFCP/18/21 which provided an overview of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's progress in delivering the priorities and performance targets set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan during 2020/21.

The Panel suggested, whilst recognising that this was a retrospective, factual report, that it may be helpful for them to provide some feedback on format and readability for consideration when producing the report in future years. The Commissioner agreed that a review session could be arranged accordingly.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

5. Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Annual Report and Statement of Assurance

The Panel received report EPFCP/19/21 which provided the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel with the draft Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2020-2021.

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel has a statutory duty to review and provide feedback on the draft document.

The report covered the financial year 2020/21 and included highlights of the year including how ECFRS spent their money, performance against targets and how the service were working to improve. It incorporated the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Authority's Statement of Assurance.

Resolved:

That the Panel agreed the draft Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2020-2021, subject to the correction of some minor typographical errors, to be advised.

6. Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report 2020-21

The Panel received report EPFCP/20/21 which provided the Police, Fire and Crime Panel with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's draft Annual Report for 2020 – 2021.

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel has a statutory duty under section 28(4) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to review the Annual Report and to make a recommendation or report on it to the Commissioner.

The Commissioner, in response to questions regarding the circulation of the report, confirmed that the intention was to use existing public channels such as social media and the ECFRS website to publish the report. There would also be hard copies available in some libraries for public accessibility.

Resolved:

That in accordance with section 28(4) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the Panel's recommendation to the Commissioner was to endorse the report.

7. Police and Crime Plan 2021 - 2024

The Panel received report EPFCP/21/21 which set out the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's draft Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024 and shared the results of the associated public survey, engagement activity, Youth Voice project and Equality Impact Assessment.

Resolved:

That in accordance with section 28(4) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the Panel's recommendation to the Commissioner was to endorse the Plan.

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

The Panel received report EPFCP/22/21 which invited comments from the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the contents of the Commissioner's updated Constitution prior to its adoption.

In response to a question concerning the review of the constitution, the Commissioner advised that it was seen as a 'living document' and was amended when required. The Commissioner suggested that the Constitution was considered by the Panel on a regular basis, and this was welcomed.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

9. Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Decisions Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/23/21 which provided information about financial and strategic decisions made by the PFCC.

In response to questions, the Commissioner advised that the government had been very engaged in wishing to set direction for community safety issues, therefore there had been many individual funding pots which had previously not been available.

Some funding was related to the Covid-19 pandemic and others were intended to give national direction relating to the strategic shift towards prevention.

The Commissioner advised that the ECFRS have been working in very close collaboration with partners including Chelmsford City Council to ensure the safety of women and girls.

In response to questioning regarding commercially sensitive information within the report, the Commissioner agreed to work with Panel members to ensure that any information Panel members required was provided, where possible.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

10. 2022-23 Budget Scene Setting

The Panel considered report EPFCP/24/21 laying out the background issues and current assumptions in setting the 2022/23 budget.

The Commissioner explained that an enhanced level of savings was assumed with the annual savings of approximately £4m included each year.

It was confirmed that the third tranche of the police programme was expected to happen on schedule, as nationally there was a commitment to recruit an additional 6000 police officers. There was £540 million held to enable the three-year programme to go ahead.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

11. 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 Commissioner paid tribute to the late Sir David Amess and highlighted his contribution to his community, serving residents passionately and kindly. The Commissioner further expressed how Sir David always had the public at the heart of everything he did whilst holding the Commissioner to account.

The terms of reference for the PCC review were completed in July and since then the Commissioner had actively engaged and contributed to the APCC call for evidence and submitted a response to the consultation for the PCC general power of competence.

The Commissioner asked the Panel for their support for giving general power of competence to PCC's.

The Commissioner advised the Panel that there had been inspections of the County Fire and Rescue Services over the past six weeks in which inspectors had observed field work. The inspectors focussed on the areas of improvement suggested from the last inspection. There had already been a debrief, however, the formal feedback was due in January and the Commissioner would share the results with the Panel for discussion after they had been received.

The Commissioner informed the Panel that there had been some successful funding bids over the past few months, one of which was a scientific technical research bid which would work to identify locations perceived as unsafe for women and girls and would help map and define the locations so improvements could be made.

There had also been £550k of safe street funding secured to tackle violence against women and girls.

The money would be used in the Bunny Walks area of Chelmsford, which was identified as a place where people, particularly women and girls, felt unsafe. Projects funded by the money included using football to engage with young people and improved street lighting. £164,753 would be spent on placing CCTV cameras with infrared technology in the Bunny Walks area and elsewhere in the city.

There would also be £40,000 spent on a digital engagement project in the same area, and £15,000 would be used for youth work. Other projects included education on healthy relationships and consent at 17 schools in Chelmsford, and the expansion of the city's street pastor scheme.

There was an additional 600 more officers within the force, compared to the staffing levels five years ago.

The Commissioner was asked whether the public perception of the police, given the tragic murder of Sarah Everard, had affected Essex and whether the Commissioner was concerned with sexism, misogyny and the culture within Essex Police. The Commissioner was also asked if there was any work being done at the moment within this area.

The Commissioner expressed sympathies for the brutal murder of Sarah Everard and explained that it was not just police culture which needed to change, it was the responsibility of all males, especially male leaders within the community, to condemn male violence against women and girls and call out any unacceptable behaviour witnessed.

Resolved:

That the verbal report was noted.

12. Report of the Ethics and Integrity Sub Committee

The Panel received report EPFCP/25/21 which provided the minutes of the meeting of the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee which met on 21 September 2021.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

13. National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels update

The Panel received a verbal update from the Chairman of the Panel on the current workstreams of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels.

Resolved:

That the verbal report was noted.

14. Forward Work Plan

The Panel received report EPFCP/26/21 setting out the planned business of the Panel.

Resolved:

That the Panel received the report, agreeing the addition of two further matters: the backlog of Police complaints, and the process of recruitment/vetting for Police Officers in Essex.

15. Dates of Future Meetings

The Panel received report EPFCP/27/21 setting out the dates of future Panel meetings.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the future meeting dates.

16. Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, 9 December 2021.

There being no urgent business, the meeting closed at 14:22.

Chairman

9 December 2021