

Mr. John Gili-Ross
Chair of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel

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Dear John

Questions to the Commissioner on the Decisions Report to the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel (17 June 2021)

Due to the fire alarm sounding during the last meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel on 17 June, we agreed that I would respond in writing to questions submitted by the Panel in respect of the Decisions Report:

Ref 133/20. Short Term Resource for Police Complaint Reviews. Is this resource increase initiative on target to achieve its objective of reducing the backlog of complaint reviews?

Whilst the rate of receipt of requests for complaint reviews is slowing, we still have a significant backlog. The short-term resources referenced in the decision report have been extended until August and, in the meantime, we are exploring all options for clearing the backlog more quickly. The Senior Responsible Officer is due to bring a plan in this regard back to our next SMT meeting. I have also commissioned our internal auditors to complete some audit and assurance work in this area for us, utilising their knowledge gained from similar work in other force areas, and the fieldwork for this is ongoing as we speak.

I am also in regular dialogue with my PCC colleagues about this issue. Suffice it to say that there is significant concern amongst PCCs about the increased workload this has generated for our offices and some concern as to whether the change in the regulations implemented last year has delivered the intended benefits in terms of increasing public trust and confidence in the system. We are each keeping the situation under review in our respective areas and, if necessary, we will collectively lobby the Government around this.

Ref 018/21 & 027/21. Boreham Complex. These two decisions are clear in their intent, however if the site acquisition is successful does the PFCC propose producing a strategic plan for growth of the Boreham estate? Would this site be considered for hosting FRS activities or is the location not suitable?

The current focus is very much on facilitating the provision of co-located, and eventually joint, fleet workshops for policing and fire and rescue services on the site. We are not currently actively exploring any other opportunities on the site but would not rule this out going forward.

Ref 032/21. Blue Light Commercial. Are there hopes / plans for Essex to have representation on the BLC Management Board (5 PCC and 1 CC)?

BlueLight Commercial held its inaugural AGM on 16 June 2021 and, with my support, confirmed the elections and re-elections to the five PCC positions on the Board. Following the addition of the CEO of the company to the Board, it was also agreed on 16 June to add a sixth PCC to the Board, which the Board will now need to action through the due process.

All PCC representatives on the Board are expected to put appropriate arrangements in place to consult with and gather the views of the wider PCC community on key issues, in order to ensure that they properly represent all our views. Even if not directly represented on the Board, the Articles of Association also permit me, as a member of the company, to vote at AGMs (as I did in June).

Ref 039/21. Athena Contract Extension. Is there any further information available on this commercially sensitive decision?

The content of the decision report is both commercially sensitive and subject to legal professional privilege so I am not at liberty to divulge the detail, however I am content that the terms secure the best commercial position possible for the force areas that are in the consortium. There is no degradation of service levels or KPIs and the terms do not increase the PCCs' risk positions in any material respect.

Ref 042/21. IT Technical Refresh. There does not appear to be any supporting information for this decision yet is not marked as "sensitive"

The technical refresh process is the cycle of regularly updating key elements of the IT infrastructure to maximise system performance. The technical refresh programme ensures that critical infrastructure and services remain fit for purpose, reliable, performant, supportable and financially sustainable, and is essential to maintaining resilient access to IT systems for all police officers and support staff.

The report itself is commercially sensitive, and in some respects also operationally sensitive, so has not been published.

PFCCFRA Decision Details are not available at the time of writing. In particular details on Decision 007/21 ESMSP

Of the 25 decisions I had taken as the PFCCFRA since the Panel's previous meeting, 13 – including that relating to ESMCP – have already been published on my website and – as indicated in the report – others will be published upon completion of the associated contracts.

As set out in the report, the decision relating to ESMCP grants authority to the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to pay £967k to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority to administer the ESMCP. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority chairs the Regional Transition Group and so acts as the funding custodian for the project. The Essex County Fire and Rescue Service previously held those funds on behalf of the consortium, and now the lead administrator has changed, has passed them over as is appropriate. The Essex County Fire and Rescue Service will continue to have access to and draw down this funding once it has transferred.

I hope that this information is of assistance to the Panel.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Hirst', written in a cursive style.

Roger Hirst
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex