

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in the Chamber of County Hall, Chelmsford on Thursday, 17 June 2021

Present:

Councillor	Representing
Frankie Ricci	Braintree District Council
Keith Barber	Brentwood Borough Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Jeremy Lager	Chelmsford City Council
Beverley Oxford	Colchester Borough Council
Ross Playle	Essex County Council
Michael Garnett	Harlow District Council
Arthur Williams	Rochford District Council
Ian Shead	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Lynda McWilliams	Tendring District Council
Gary Collins	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
Gemma Bint	Democratic Services Officer
Sophie Campion	Senior Democratic Services Officer, Secretary to the Panel
Ben-Julian Harrington	Chief Constable, Essex Police
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Candidate
Jane Gardner	Democratic Services Manager
Emma Tombs	Chief Executive and Chief Fire Officer
Jo Turton	

1 Election of Chairman

The Secretary to the Panel opened the meeting and invited nominations for the Election of Chairman for this municipal year.

John Gili-Ross was proposed by Councillor Godfrey Isaacs and seconded by Councillor Lynda McWilliams. There being no other nominations, John Gili-Ross was duly elected as Chairman and took the chair.

On behalf of the Panel the Chairman thanked the former Chairman Cllr Wendy Schmitt and Vice-Chairman Cllr Malcolm Maddocks for their work in directing panel activities over the last 3 years. Their work and support was very much appreciated. He also thanked the support staff.

2 Election of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman invited nominations for the Election of the Vice-Chairman for this municipal year.

Councillor Godfrey Isaacs was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Councillor Ian Shead. There being no other nominations, Councillor Godfrey Isaacs was duly elected as Vice-Chairman.

The Vice-Chairman echoed the comments by the Chairman and welcomed a good working relationship with the Commissioner going forward, with good communication and working together through working groups and sub-committees.

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. Councillor Oxford was present in a non-voting capacity due to her membership appointment being subject to a call-in period.
2. The following apologies were noted:
 - Councillor Chris Hossack, Brentwood Borough Council (substituted by Councillor Keith Barber)
 - Councillor Andrew Baggott, Basildon Borough Council
 - Councillor Mark Heard, Maldon District Council
 - Councillor Aniket Patel, Epping Forest District Council
3. 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 Frankie Ricci declared a Code Interest in that his son is a police officer. Councillor Ricci participated fully in the meeting.

4 Appointment to Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee

The Panel received and noted the Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules for the Ethics and Integrity of Essex Police, Fire And Crime Panel Sub-Committee (EPFCP/08/21).

RESOLVED:

That the following four members of the Panel be appointed to the Sub-Committee –

- John Gili-Ross

- Councillor Godfrey Isaacs
- Councillor Ian Shead
- Councillor Lynda McWilliams

5 Balanced Appointment Objective

The Panel received report EPFCP/09/21 setting out that the composition of the Panel did not comply with the statutory 'balanced appointment objective' and setting out the proposed steps necessary to achieve it for this Panel period.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Panel agreed to achieve the balanced panel objective by inviting minority political parties to put forward nominations as follows:
 - (a) The Labour Party – two members
 - (b) The Liberal Democrat Party - one member
2. That the proposal be submitted to the Home Office for confirmation and that subject to the agreement of the Home Office, the nominations received are reported to the next meeting of the panel.

6 Minutes

- a) The minutes of the meeting held on the 4 February 2021 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.
- b) The minutes of the meeting to consider the proposed precepts held on the 4 February 2021 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman, subject to noting that under Minute 4 – the Commissioner had provided a verbal response to the query raised on the separation of pay and non-pay on the Strategic Change Efficiencies and Savings Plan 2021/22, rather than a follow up written explanation.

7 Questions to the Chairman from members of the public

There were none.

8 Police and Crime Plan Performance Measures (Quarter 4 2020/21)

The Panel received report EPFCP/10/21 which provided an overview of Essex Police's progress in delivering the priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan (as extended for 2020/21), based on data and other information to the end of March 2021.

Introducing the item, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner drew attention to key areas including:

- The fall in crime during the whole of 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 and whilst the pandemic had contributed to this, key crimes had already been falling prior to that.

- It had been agreed that comparators going forward would be made with 2019 as a starting point rather than 2020, due to the impact of the pandemic during 2020.
- With more criminals trying to be proactive, there had been a surge in activities to tackle particular areas of crime through enforcement activity and working together and a focus on breaking trends during a difficult year.
- The shift in the way the force was contacted with an increase in contacts via Live Chat which had resulted in a positive impact on the contacts via 101.
- The increase in Essex's Special Constabulary and the activities undertaken in Quarter 4.
- The work of the new Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Teams which were launched across the county on 1 March 2021.
- The improvements in road safety, with a reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured on Essex roads.
- The extensive activity to tackle the importation and supply of class A and B drugs.

The Commissioner acknowledged the work that had been done but noted there was more to do and welcomed the opportunity to work together with the Panel.

Members asked questions about

- Recognising the diverse work of the Special Constabulary and how this could be further promoted. In response it was explained that new ideas were always being sought. There was a new person leading the Special Constabulary bringing some fresh ideas. Social Media had an impact on recruitment and recognising individuals for their work also had a positive impact.
- Coffee with cops for unparished areas. In response it was advised that Coffee with cops was not restricted to parished areas and many Districts included this within their own local engagement plans. This could be picked up through the Safety Partnerships.
- Measures for improving the 101 service for residents and the success of the QR codes on the 101 service. It was advised that the QR codes were being trialled in certain areas and further detail on the trial would be provided.
- Whether the Operation Trespass would be rolled out to Councils. It was confirmed that was part of the plan going forward.
- The management of E-scooters. It was advised that there was a new Operation Solstice to tackle this issue. The E-scooters presented difficulties with other road users as they were a risk to pedestrians on pavements and there was a risk to users if used on the road. Their use was illegal in most scenarios other than in pilot areas to seek responsible use with other road users. Work was being done around prevention and providing advice and guidance, however the Police had the power to prosecute where appropriate. The Police were working with the County Council on this issue through Safer Essex Roads.

- Crime from outside the County. It was reported that the County Lines came out of the larger cities into the County, particularly from London and there was a focus on this issue. Figures on crime coming into the County from other areas would be provided.
- Positive engagement with young people. The Commissioner explained that he had re-introduced school's officers that visit schools with particular issues. There was collaboration with the Fire and Rescue Service on education and this was now a focussed area of work.
- Knife Crime Strategy. A programme has been developed, with a three-pronged approach; dealing with serious criminals who build gangs, dealing with gangs on the streets and through the violence and vulnerability group partnership work. There were several streams of funding being used on these programmes. Since these measures had been introduced in September 2019, there had been some success in stopping the increase in knife crime, but further work to reduce knife crime was still needed based on what worked. There is an engage and educate policy where appropriate, however the Chief Constable confirmed that there is no tolerance of violent crime and enforcement is used to tackle criminal behaviour.

Members took the opportunity to

- Note the areas where there had been successes, particularly in reducing crime and tackling certain serious crimes.
- Recognise the positive work that had been done by the Policing team in the Uttlesford area.

The meeting was adjourned at 14:45 due to a fire alarm and reconvened at 15:30.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That members of the Panel noted and sought clarity on the content of the report and attached appendix.

9 2022/23 Budget Setting Process

The Panel received report EPFCP/11/21 which provided an outline of the 2022/23 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.

Members unanimously agreed the recommendation contained within the report.

RESOLVED:

That members of the Panel noted the report and agreed the PFCC's proposal to participate in the budget setting process through the creation

of a 2022/23 Budget Working Group; with dates and membership to be determined.

10 PFCC Decisions Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/12/21 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.

RESOLVED:

That any matters requiring response by the Commissioner would be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Panel.

11 The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to update the Panel on any ongoing issues

Due to time limitations caused by a fire alarm, the Commissioner's update would be provided in writing. As proposed by the Commissioner's Chief Executive it was

RESOLVED:

That a working group be established in connection with the development of the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan, with the membership and dates of the group to be determined.

12 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Annual Report

The Panel considered report EPFCP/13/21 providing an overview of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel's activities during the 2020/21 municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel received and noted the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Annual Report for 2020/21.

13 Essex PFCP Grant Claim and Outturn Report - 2020/21

The Panel received report EPFCP/14/21 updating the Panel on the outturn position against the grant to be filed with the Home Office prior to the deadline of 31 July 2021. 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.

14 National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels (NAPFPCP) update

The Panel received report EPFCP/15/21 on the background and current workstreams of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

15 Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting would take place at 2.00pm on Thursday, 21 October 2021.

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm.

Chairman

21 October 2021