

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 6 December 2018

Present:

Councillor	Representing
Anthony Hedley	Basildon Borough Council
Chris Hossack	Brentwood District Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Bob Shepherd	Chelmsford City Council
Tim Young	Colchester Borough Council
Sam Kane	Epping Forest District Council
Malcolm Maddocks	Essex County Council (Chairman)
Chris Vince	Harlow District Council
Penny Channer	Maldon District Council
Lesley Butcher	Rochford District Council
Ann Holland	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Lynda McWilliams	Tendring District Council
Joy Redsell	Thurrock Council
Susan Barker	Uttlesford District Council
John Gili-Ross	Independent Member

Apologies for Absence

Wendy Schmitt	Braintree District Council
Mike Lilley	Colchester Borough District Council
Jo McPherson	Rochford District Council
Kay Odysseos	Independent Member

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report of the Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received and it was noted that

1. Councillor Wendy Schmitt, Braintree District Council; Councillor Mike Lilley, Colchester Brough Council; Councillor Jo McPherson, Rochford District Council and Kay Odysseos, Independent Member had sent their apologies.
2. Councillor Tim Young, Colchester Borough Council substituted for Councillor Lilley; and Councillor Lesley Butcher substituted for Councillor McPherson.
3. Councillors declared Code Interests as follows:

Name	Nature of Interest
M Maddocks	In receipt of a Police Pension

C Hossack	Chairman of local Community Safety Partnership
V Ranger	Chairman of local Community Safety Partnership
S Kane	Chairman of local Community Safety Partnership
L McWilliams	Chairman of local Community Safety Partnership and her son is a serving Police Officer
G Isaacs	Vice-Chairman of local Community Safety Partnership
J Redsell	Member of the Essex, Southend and Thurrock Safeguarding Committee
A Holland	Her son is a serving Police Officer
L Butcher	In receipt of a Police Widows' Pension

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman following the agreed amendments below:

Minute 1 (item 1): should read S Kane not M Kane

Minute 2 (item 4): should read nearly 500 Special Constables

3 Questions from the public

There were none.

4 Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan Update

The Commissioner stated good progress was being made on the Plan which has now gone out to public survey which is open until 15 January 2019. Hard copies are available from Council buildings and libraries throughout the county. The Commissioner encouraged the Panel to get involved with robust feedback.

Councillor Maddocks thanked Councillor Hedley and John Gili-Ross for forming the small working group of the Panel which is continuing to look at the Plan.

The Commissioner added that the survey is not a formal statutory consultation, therefore, responses are not being restricted.

The recommendation was noted.

5 Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Finance Update (Policing)

The Commissioner, accompanied by Pippa Brent-Isherwood, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer of the Office of the PFCC, introduced this item and stated over 4,000 responses had been received on the policing precept survey.

With regard to the 2017/18 budget there is likely to be a minor overspend at the end of the financial year; however, the current level of overspend is expected to be narrowed in forthcoming months.

Recruitment is complete with all 150 new police officers appointed and due to be deployed in local and community policing teams in January and February next year.

Upcoming pressures on the budget include the pensions valuation directions received in September 2018 whereby central government has changed the incremental pensions discount rate for all of the public sector. This will impact Essex policing by in excess of £3m. The Commissioner informed the Panel he had been vocal in Westminster as there would be an impact upon front-line policing. Discussions are ongoing with regard to central government making good this shortfall in the upcoming settlement (which was due on 6 December but is delayed).

A further pressure is the cost of vehicle insurance, which is true of all south-east England. This will add additional pressures of around £1m.

In answer to a question the Commissioner reminded the Panel that the former Chief Constable had reported at a previous meeting that Essex was operating 288 Police Officers short. The 150 new appointments have narrowed that gap. More precept freedom has been lobbied for and a precept increase of between £12-24 on a Band D property is anticipated, depending upon the settlement. The Chief Constable has been asked to put together deployment scenarios based upon various levels of additional officers.

In response to a question, the Commissioner explained that third-party payments are largely incurred through collaboration in projects such as Athena and the ICT seven-forces project. Regarding the Athena programme the Commissioner stated the additional costs are no longer cost overruns but enhancements to make the programme more flexible. The £800k overspend on staffing relates to overtime payments; however, the deployment of the new officers will go some way to mitigating this as the force is currently asking a great deal of officers and staff. Councillor Vince expressed his concern over police officers and staff being overworked.

Following a question from Councillor Hedley related to authorities grant-funding front-line policing the Commissioner stated 16 parish/town/district councils have agreed to fund such, and front-line Special Constables fully grant-funded had been deployed in five of these areas to date. He stated the willingness of non-precepted authorities to put community safety to the forefront is not a large expense and is a proactive approach without the imposition of additional taxes. As Special Constables they are fully controlled and supported by Essex Police as warranted officers. The Commissioner did not accept that other authorities are funding officers which the PFCC is failing to fund. He stated it is constructive partnership working to support the police with funding fixed-term; but, he stated, those

appointed are not on fixed-term contracts and these officers would be re-deployed were the funding arrangements withdrawn.

Councillor Young stated Colchester BC funds PCSOs and Special Constables and argued the funding issues are down to central government cuts. Councillor Redsell stated Thurrock Council works together with communities to fund additional police officers. Councillor Kane praised the work undertaken by those officers funded by Epping Forest DC.

Councillor Susan Barker left the meeting at 2.40 p.m.

The Commissioner informed the Panel that investment in technology has enabled police officers to work in new ways so the number of officers required is not at the level that would previously be needed. For example, the former Chief Constable often quoted a figure of 800 new officers. More realistically a figure of around 450 additional officers would now be the ideal scenario. As such, with the precept the Commissioner stated he will be looking at the deployment of new officers again in the new year.

6 2018/19 Budget and Precept Scene Setting: Essex Fire and Rescue Service

The Commissioner, accompanied by Glenn McGuiness, Acting Chief Finance Officer, introduced the report and highlighted the most significant variance as the reduction in capital financing requirements following a review of capital expenditure. Other variances referred to were in relation to the underspend on retained fire officers which is offset by an overspend on full-time fire officers, which is due to the difficulties in recruiting retained officers, therefore, full-time officers have been required to work more.

There is an impact of new pension regulations but 88% of this will be funded by HM Treasury in relation to the Fire and Rescue Service. The Commissioner informed the Panel that there is no resolution to the national FBU pay claim presently, and he could offer no further details at this stage. In response to a question from Cllr. Holland, the Commissioner advised that progress is being made in Essex with mixed-crewing. However, it is not, as yet, at the ideal level of flexibility as there are training issues to be resolved, but progress is being made.

The Commissioner explained the Home Office is keen to explore the Incident Recording System being expanded onto a national platform. There would be no financial impact on Essex. In relation to ICT procurement the Commissioner is looking at local business cases so that joint-procurement with Essex Police on systems can occur.

Following a question from the Chairman the Commissioner stated the pooling of capital budgets is possible between Essex Police and the Fire and Rescue Service. However, he does not envisage service delivery budgets coming together, and this would also require central government to issue Statutory Instruments. The complexities involved significantly outweigh the simplification of pooling budgets. Councillor Hedley stated the

rationalisation of physical assets such as mechanical workshops could bring about financial efficiencies.

7 Essex County Fire and Rescue Service 2017/18 Performance Report

This item had been deferred from the previous meeting.

The Commissioner informed the Panel there has been a welcome decline in house fires. The data shows that arrival times within specific timeframes are slightly above the target but this has had no detrimental effects.

In response to a question in relation to the 145 leavers from the service the Commissioner stated around 12.4% of staff had had exit interviews with the top three reasons for leaving being retirement; end of fixed-term contracts; and travelling/location changes.

8 Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Year-to-Date Performance Report 2018/19

In presenting the report the Commissioner stated there had been a reduction in road traffic collisions. He stated male drivers aged 18-30 still make up the largest proportion of those at fault in road traffic collisions.

Councillor Hossack asked the Commissioner whether speed-humps are no longer being used due to restrictions on emergency vehicles. The Commissioner confirmed that this was not a material issue he had any discussions about. Councillor Maddocks confirmed that some speed humps had been taken out during roadworks as they had proved ineffective.

Various Members of the Panel made comments about the positive impacts of Speedwatch schemes. Councillor Redsell asked about road safety cameras and why some areas can get them whilst others cannot. The Commissioner stated that mobile interventions are effective and that there is, as far as he is concerned, no reason why they should not be erected. The survey undertaken on speed cameras was Essex Police area wide.

The Panel agreed a future item on speed cameras be brought to a future meeting.

9 Police Fire and Crime Commissioner's Constitution Report (Policing)

The Commissioner introduced the revised Constitution which had been reviewed recently. The Commissioner stated he is always willing to look at the Constitution and bring it to the Panel with amendments.

There was a recommendation to invite comments upon the Constitution and Mr John Gili-Ross suggested an amendment be made on page 11 of the Constitution under Article 2, paragraph 3(c) replacing the words 'Independent Police Complaints Commission' with 'Independent Office for Police Conduct'.

In response to a question about the length of the Constitution the Commissioner informed the Panel that it is dictated by statutes. It would be

easier to keep the document short and refer to various Acts, Amendments and Renewals. However, experience shows it is more convenient to put these all in one place within the Constitution for ease of reference.

The Chairman thanked the Commissioner for the report.

10 Pensions Valuations Directions

It was agreed that this item had been dealt with in agenda item 5.

11 Police Fire and Crime Commissioner's Decisions Report

Councillor Maddocks informed the Panel that he had been requested to sign-off the Annual Reports of both the Police and the Essex Fire and Rescue Service in the absence, due to holiday, of Councillor Wendy Schmitt. With a minor amendment to the fourth page he approved the Police report and this was agreed by the Panel. However, the Fire and Rescue Service Report required some amendments and Councillor Maddocks stated he would aim to sign this off on Wednesday, 12 December.

The Commissioner introduced the decisions report and stated they were as presented. There were no questions. It was confirmed by the Secretary to the Panel that the decisions would be circulated on the first Monday of each month as previously agreed.

The Commissioner updated the Panel on recruitment and reshaping of the Senior Leadership Team for the Fire and Rescue Service. A Deputy Chief Fire Officer has not been appointed and the recruitment process has recommenced. However, there is an option to appoint somebody on a temporary secondment, in the meantime. There will be an update on the process at the next meeting of the Panel.

12 National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels update

Mr John Gili-Ross gave a brief update to the Panel, referring to the first AGM of the National Association which took place in early November as part of the National Police, Fire and Crime Panel Annual Conference which was very well attended with, in excess of 130 delegates. However, he was the only representative from Essex in attendance. Overall the event was positive and worthwhile with two keynote speakers, and a number of networking forums including one on becoming a Police, Fire and Crime Panel led by Mr Gili-Ross on behalf of the Essex Panel

To update the Panel Mr Gili-Ross stated:

- He (as Chairman); the two Vice-Chairman and the seven Executive Board members were all unanimously re-appointed for 12 months
- The association Constitution was presented and adopted unanimously
- An expenses policy was tabled and unanimously agreed
- A web presence was supported, and work has started on this
- Dialogue is still ongoing with regard to the use of the Home Office Grant for the £500 Association subscription fee. Current Home

Office legal opinion is that the NAPFCP subscription cannot be met from the Grant. Panels have written to the Policing Minister, copied to local MPs for a response

- Currently 26 Police and Crime Panels are members of the Association, all based in England
- Most Panels in the country now pay members allowances

Councillor Tim Young raised an issue of party politics as Mr Gili-Ross mentioned appointment to the Executive Board of the NAPFCP was not conducted on political lines, and this was unanimously agreed at the Annual General Meeting. Councillor Young stated the reason most Panel members are attending is due to political office, and, as such, he could not agree that membership of the Executive Board should not have taken this into account.

Councillor Anthony Hedley left the meeting at 3.50 p.m.

13 **Forward Look**

The Panel agreed that it would meet on the date set aside for the February meeting, namely Thursday, 7 February 2019. This meeting would be used to sign-off the Fire and Rescue Plan.

It was advised that an update on the revised regulations relating to police complaints was likely to be ready to come forward to the May meeting.

Councillor Lynda McWilliams left the meeting at 3.55 p.m.

Councillor Ann Holland left the meeting at 3.55 p.m.

Councillor Bob Shepherd left the meeting at 3.55 p.m.

A future meeting will also consider the Peer Review of the Essex Fire and Rescue Service when this is available.

14 **Date of Next Meeting**

The Panel will next meet on Thursday, 24 January 2019 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 1, County Hall. The substantive items will be the proposed Police, and Fire and Rescue Service precepts for 2019/20.

With no urgent business the meeting closed at 4.00 p.m.

Chairman

24 January 2019