



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

Via email to [Sophie.Campion2@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Sophie.Campion2@essex.gov.uk)

Kelvedon Park, London Road, Rivenhall,  
Witham, Essex, CM8 3HB

Telephone: 01245 291600  
Fax: 01245 291601  
E-mail: [pfcc@essex.police.uk](mailto:pfcc@essex.police.uk)  
<http://www.essex.pfcc.police.uk>

Date: 21 July 2021

Enquiries to: [pippa.brent-isherwood@essex.police.uk](mailto:pippa.brent-isherwood@essex.police.uk)

Dear John

### **Commissioner's Statement to the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel**

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 share with you in writing the update that I would usually have shared verbally with the Panel:

#### Police and Crime Plan development

Work on developing the Police and Crime Plan for the new term has commenced in earnest. A series of themed stakeholder workshops commenced at the end of June and will continue through until early August. Following the meeting on 17 June, working group meetings have also been scheduled for Panel members.

Following the election, there will also be a mid-term refresh of the Fire and Rescue Plan, to reflect progress made to date and to renew our commitment to the priorities already set out. We'll involve the Panel appropriately in this too at the appropriate time.

#### PCCs Review

The outcomes of Stage 1 of the Government's PCCs Review, which began last July, were published in March. As a result, the Home Office has already introduced amendments to the Specified Information Order which took effect at the end of May, making it easier for the public to access information about how the force is performing.

We are expecting a White Paper on fire reform to be published for consultation later in the year, based around the three key areas of people, professionalism and governance. The consultation is expected to include proposals to mandate joint governance of policing and fire and rescue services under a PFCC or a directly elected Mayor and to legislate to create operational independence for

Chief Fire Officers, as well as options for clarifying the legal entities within the PFCC model. The outcomes of the consultation are expected to form the basis of new legislation early next year. Going forward, the Government is proposing to mandate that all PCCs appoint a Deputy, and has also committed to:

- Changing the voting system for future PCC elections to First Past the Post
- Working with the College of Policing, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to build on the Accountability Guidance already in place to help promote and embed a positive working relationship between PCCs and their Chief Constables
- Consulting on potential changes to the Policing Protocol Order to reflect changes in the relationships between the parties to it that have occurred over time
- Amending section 38 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to make the process for dismissing a Chief Constable more rigorous and transparent
- Working with the LGA to develop a good governance training package for Police and Crime Panels
- Considering the role of the IOPC in handling complaints made about the conduct of PCCs and their Deputies
- Working with the APCC to develop a comprehensive set of non-statutory guidance on the role of a PCC
- Consulting on granting all PCCs a General Power of Competence to assist them to play their statutory roles in the wider criminal justice system

I have already had several discussions with both the policing and fire Minister and their officials about the outcomes of Stage 1 of the review, and there will be much for me and my team to do throughout the rest of this year to continue to shape this agenda in a productive and progressive manner.

#### Response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry

In March, I approved a new Enforcement Policy for the Fire and Rescue Service which places clearer emphasis on educating the public as well as providing clear routes to enforcement where required. In April, I also approved the Fire and Rescue Service's business case for the use of the latest round of Government surge funding awarded to support protection work, and particularly to identify and manage the risks associated with high rise buildings. This funding will be used to upskill existing staff and to recruit dedicated resources to support delivery of the National Fire Chiefs' Council's Building Risk Review. Funding has also been set aside to fund increased enforcement activity and to fund the Essex Chamber of Commerce to work with ECFRS to provide proactive fire safety and compliance advice to businesses.

#### Violence and Vulnerability Unit Update

The multi-agency Violence and Vulnerability Unit continues to deliver excellent work. We have also recently received the very welcome news that the Unit's funding application for 2021/22 has been approved, meaning that Essex will receive a further £1.16m to spend this financial year on tackling violence and vulnerability across the county. The work plan and communications activity for 2021/22 have been approved and I will keep colleagues apprised of the delivery of these plans through both the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel and the Violence and Vulnerability Round Table that I chair.

#### New Victims' Code

The Ministry of Justice launched a new Victims' Code of Practice on 1 April, which will pave the way for consultation on a new Victims' Law which is planned for later this year. Under the new Code, victims have, for the first time, the automatic right to be informed when a perpetrator is due to leave prison, and when an offender who is a foreign national is deported. Victims of sexual

violence are now able to choose the gender of their police interviewer and clearer advice will be given on when evidence can be pre-recorded ahead of a trial. The new Code also provides greater flexibility regarding when and how a Victim Personal Statement can be made, recognising that, for many, the impact of crime is not immediately apparent. As the Chair of the Essex Criminal Justice Board, I'll be making sure that these changes are properly implemented within Essex.

#### Additional Victims' Funding

In early May, we received notification that we had successfully lobbied for additional resources to support victims in Essex. An award of £500k for this financial year with a further indicative award for next financial year will bring 4.5 extra Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and 11 more Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) to Essex to support victims and encourage victims to engage and remain engaged in the criminal justice process.

#### Safer Streets funding

I am delighted that we have successfully worked with partners to secure £432k through this fund to help prevent neighbourhood and acquisitive crime such as burglary, theft and robbery in an area of Thurrock. My staff and partners have recently worked together with partners to submit further bids to the third round of this fund and we await the outcome of these.

#### Diversity within the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

In March, I received the Service's annual Gender Pay Gap Report and was really heartened that the gap has reduced to 2.4%. The progress we have made in increasing the recruitment of females to both whole time firefighter roles and senior management positions means that ECFRS now has one of the narrowest gender pay gaps in the fire and rescue sector in the country, which I am really proud of.

Since the Panel met on 17 June, Jo Turton, the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, has announced that she will retire on 31 December. When I took on governance of the Fire and Rescue Service in 2017 it needed significant change. I am sure you will agree that Jo has made a significant impact since I recruited her in 2018 to lead this change. The intervening years have not been easy as we have worked through the improvements and changes needed, but together we have built a stronger, more resilient and more responsive service; one that better reflects the aspirations of the public and works harder to prevent and protect people from harm as well as responding when they need help. Jo has played a vital part in that progress and it is something for which I am grateful to her and of which she should be very proud. However, there is still much to do to help the service continue to develop and grow, and I therefore look forward to working with the Panel to recruit a new Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive who can build on Jo's achievements and continue to drive progress and development within ECFRS.

Since the Panel's last meeting, it has also been confirmed that Pippa Mills, the Deputy Chief Constable of Essex Police, will be moving on to become the new Chief Constable in West Mercia. I and my staff congratulate her on her new role, wish her every success in West Mercia, and look forward to assisting the Chief Constable to select her successor.

Yours sincerely,



**Roger Hirst**  
**Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex**