

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in the Council Chamber at County Hall, Chelmsford on Thursday, 9 December 2021

Present:

Councillor

Frankie Ricci
Keith Barber
Godfrey Isaacs
Jeremy Lager
Beverley Oxford
Paul Stalker
Ross Playle
Michael Garnett
Mark Heard
Ian Shead
Lynda McWilliams
Maggie Sutton

Representing

Braintree District Council
Brentwood Borough Council
Castle Point Borough Council
Chelmsford City Council
Colchester Borough Council
Epping Forest District Council
Essex County Council
Harlow District Council
Maldon District Council
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Tendring District Council
Uttlesford District Council

Co-opted Independent Members

John Gili-Ross (Chairman)

Also in attendance

Julia Berry	Head of Finance and s151 Officer, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Sophie Campion	Senior Democratic Services Officer, Secretary to the Panel
Neil Cross	Chief Finance Officer, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Darren Horsman	Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Andy Prophet	Deputy Chief Constable

1 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 Sutton was welcomed as a new member of the Panel representing Uttlesford District Council and replacing Councillor Day. The Chairman expressed the Panel's thanks to Councillor Day for his excellent service and commitment during his time on the Panel.
2. The following apologies were noted:

- Councillor Collins, Thurrock Council
- Councillor Williams, Rochford District Council
- Councillor Baggott, Basildon Borough Council
- Sheila Murphy, Co-opted Independent Member

Apologies had also been received from Jane Gardner, Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Chief Constable Harrington and Rick Hylton, Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

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 in Essex. Councillor Ricci participated fully in the meeting.

2 Minutes

- a) The minutes of the meeting held on the 29 October 2021 were approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment on Minute 14 to read 'backlog of police complaint reviews'. The minutes were signed by the Chairman.
- b) The minutes of the confirmation hearing meeting held on the 29 October 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 Police and Crime Plan Performance Measures Report - Quarter 2 2021/22

The Panel received report EPFCP/28/21 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 September 2021.

The Commissioner responded to questions raised relating to a number of issues:

- Actual figures in addition to percentages were requested for future reports and comparative data for prior to the pandemic lockdown.
- 101 call service, including abandoned call rates
- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders issued and the Anti-Social Behaviour Board
- Benchmarking progress against comparator authorities
- Types of slavery in Essex
- Prosecution rates for slavery and human trafficking offences

In response to questions from Members the following points were made under the Police and Crime Plan priorities:

Priority 1 - More Local, Visible and Accessible Policing

The Commissioner advised that the priorities were aligned with those of the Government and the funding coming through from Government was now in line with the aims in Essex. The priorities were also being expanded.

By the end of 2022 there would be an additional 800 officers. There had been improved accessibility through 101 and the internet and the town teams were improving visibility. It was acknowledged that there had been a significant rise in concerns about safety, particularly for women and girls following the brutal murder of Sarah Everard. There was some concern expressed regarding visibility in rural areas of the County.

Information on the Police Cadets and Marine Unit was provided in response to questions raised.

Priority 2 - Crack Down on Anti-social Behaviour

The issues arising from the illegal use of e-scooters were discussed. The Commissioner reported that 230 e-scooters had been seized under Operation Solstice, twice as many as the previous period. It was acknowledged that they did cause harm to people and the Commissioner did not consider them compatible with current road usage. It was clarified that whilst it was illegal to ride on them in a public place, it was not illegal to sell them.

Priority 4 - Reverse the Trend in Serious Violence

The Commissioner reported on the work of the Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Strategic Governance Board. It was noted that there was still work to do in this area. A strong evidence base and support for victims to pursue the matter were key. It was reported that although many serious crimes had decreased in number such as Homicide, Burglary and Theft, the situation was different with sexual offences and more work was needed on prevention and bringing perpetrators to justice.

Priority 6 - Protecting Children and Vulnerable People

In response to a question about the recent case of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes, the Panel was advised that learning from the case would be taken through the Safe-guarding Children's Partnerships in Essex. The Commissioner reassured the Panel that a lot of money, time and resources had been invested into the area of protecting vulnerable children.

Information was provided on the new Hate Crime reporting centres in Braintree. In response to a question the Commissioner also provided information on partnership working and sharing of intelligence between agencies.

Priority 7 - Improving safety on our roads

It was confirmed that Essex Police supports speed cameras and the Commissioner was not aware of any currently de-commissioned. Issues were raised regarding Community Speed Watch training.

Reassurance was given with regard to the approach and response to incidents within the night-time economy.

The Panel made a number of suggestions during the discussion which the Commissioner agreed to consider:

- Improvements to the 101 call service including; the possibility of a call back waiting service and possible options for analysing the reasons for abandoned calls.
- Improvements to communications with regard to; outcomes from Operation Solstice and response to the E-scooter issues and the new Hate Crime Incident Reporting Centres.

The Commissioner also agreed to provide the Panel with data on the following issues after the meeting:

- Anti-Social Behaviour information by Division
- Figures for convictions and successful resolutions with regard to Slavery and Human Trafficking offences

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

5 2022/23 Draft Budget Update

The Panel received report EPFCP/29/21 which provided an update on the 2022/23 draft budgets for Essex Police and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, including the background issues and latest assumptions being used in drafting the 2022/23 budgets.

The Budget-Setting Working Group had attended two meetings to go through the latest assumptions and background issues in detail, including where money had been spent and savings were being made. A third meeting was planned in January 2022.

The Commissioner introduced the report highlighting the latest assumptions and target areas for Policing and what the shortfall was likely to be. It was reported that the funding settlement was not known at the time of the meeting. The Commissioner also set out the latest position and assumptions for the Fire and Rescue Service and explained why it would not be possible to freeze the precept this year.

In response to questions raised, the following points were made:

- There were currently fewer people leaving the force than expected in forward projections, but that is likely to change. There was some uncertainty around pension payments due to the McCloud ruling which may have affected decisions to retire. The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that leavers figures were looked at each month and broken down by profile.
- The difference between assumptions of pay increases for Essex Police of 2.5% and the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service of 2% was explained. There had been a public sector pay freeze the previous year which had impacted the Police but had not impacted the Fire and Rescue Service who had received a 1.5% pay increase in an agreement between

the Local Government Association and the Fire Brigade Union. This had been unfunded by the Government and had therefore been funded locally from resources. It was expected that within the three-year settlement the intention was that pay increases would be funded unless inflation surged. If that was the case in-year discussions would need to take place.

Resolved:

That members of the Panel noted the current assumptions in the latest drafts of the 2022/23 budgets for Essex Police and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

6 Police Fire and Crime Commissioner Decisions Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/30/21 that provided information about financial and strategic decisions made by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

7 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:

Launch of the Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024

The Commissioner confirmed the launch of the new Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024. It was confirmed that the Panel Members would receive a copy. The Plan set out the strategic shift towards prevention. There would be 12 priorities going forward.

The Panel thanked the officers at the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for their work on the Plan.

Launch of the Crime Prevention Fund

The Crime Prevention Fund had been launched with £200,000 available for groups and organisations across the County with a focus on crime prevention. The Panel were asked to publicise this fund within their own forums.

Restorative Justice Week

There was a Restorative Justice Team who brought together the victim and perpetrator for a reconciliation, which was often found to be more successful in changing the ways of the perpetrator than time in jail. The team were recognised across the country.

Recruitment of Deputy Chief Fire Officer

There had been a very successful assessment day for the post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer. The recruitment of Rick Hylton to the post of Chief Fire Officer had resulted in a vacancy for the post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer. The recruitment

process had been run as an external recruitment with a good field of applicants, some internal and some external. The Commissioner was confident that an appointment would be made following the success of the assessment day.

Independent Custody Visitors

There was currently an advert out for the recruitment of Independent Custody Visitors and Panel Members were asked to consider if they knew anyone who was interested in the criminal justice process that may be interested.

PFCC Conference

The next conference was currently being planned. The last one had taken place in March 2020. The next conference was due to take place on 24 February 2022 at Colchester Stadium. The Commissioner invited Panel Members to attend.

Resolved:

That the verbal report was noted.

8 Annual Complaints Report

The Panel considered report EPFCP/31/21 providing the Panel with an update on the handling of complaints made against the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner since 1 October 2020.

The Chairman explained that the Panel would be proposing to add an item to the Forward Work Plan to review the Panel's Complaints Procedure with a view to making some minor changes to the process.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the Annual Complaints Report.

9 Essex PFCCP Budget Half Year Outturn Report - 2021/22

The Panel received report EPFCP/32/21 updating the Panel on the outturn position for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021 as filed with the Home Office prior to the deadline of 31 October 2021. As Essex County Council is the lead authority for the Panel the return is required to be signed off by ECC's finance team once checked for accuracy. This is with respect to a grant claim to the Home Office who will only pay for reimbursement of actual expenditure incurred in year.

Resolved:

That the report was noted.

10 National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels (NAPFCP) update

The Chairman provided the Panel with a verbal update on the latest activities of the NAPFCP.

Annual National Conference

The Annual Conference for P(F)CPs was held in November 2021 which had a good turnout from Panels, with some good workshops.

NAPFCP AGM

The AGM was held in November 2021. All positions on the Executive Committee were uncontested and confirmed with a good mix of experienced and newer members.

Survey

A survey was undertaken to identify significant changes in panel makeup following the May 2021 Election and to identify good working practice, which had been sent to all Panels nationally. A report had been written on the results and distributed to all Panels for comment. Once finalised this would be sent to the Home Office and Local Government Association (LGA) and circulated to Panel Members.

Discussions with Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and LGA

Previously quarterly sessions had been held with the leads, but going forward it was proposed that this would be bi-monthly discussions. One of the aims was to promote good working practices, particularly with regard to working relationships between panels and commissioners.

Resolved:

That the verbal report was noted.

11 Forward Work Plan

The Panel received report EPFCP/33/21 setting out the planned business of the Panel.

Resolved:

That the Panel received the report, agreeing the addition of a review of the Panel's complaints procedure.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, 3 February 2022.

The Chairman wished everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year and hoped that everyone stayed safe and well.

There being no urgent business, the meeting closed at 4.28pm.