

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in the Council Chamber at County Hall, Chelmsford on Thursday 23 June 2022

Present:

Councillor

David Dadds
Frankie Ricci
Keith Barber
Russ Savage
Jeremy Lager
Mike Lilley
Paul Stalker
Ross Playle
Mike Garnett
Mark Heard
Ian Shead
Gary Collins
Lee Scordis

Representing

Basildon Borough Council
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 City Council
Thurrock Council
Co-opted Member for Balanced Appointment

Co-opted Independent Members

John Gili-Ross (Chairman)

Also in attendance

Gemma Bint	Democratic Services Officer
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive, Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC)
Sophie Campion	Senior Democratic Services Officer, Secretary to the Panel
Jane Gardner	Deputy Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)
Rick Hylton	Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Emma Tombs	Democratic Services Manager

1 Election of Chairman

Having been proposed by Councillor Heard and seconded by Councillor Garnett and there being no other nominations, it was

Resolved:

That John Gili-Ross was duly elected as Chairman of the Panel.

2 Review of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel's Constitution Procedure Rules

The Panel received report EPFCP/08/22 which asked the Panel to consider a change to the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel's Constitution Procedure Rules.

An amendment to Recommendation 2 was proposed by Councillor Ricci and seconded by Councillor Dadds, which sought to remove all references in the Constitution and appendices to only Council Members being eligible for the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman. On being put to the vote the amendment was passed and it was

Resolved:

1. That the Panel amends the Procedure Rules within its Constitution to allow for the appointment of up to two Vice-Chairmen.
2. That the Panel removes the word 'Council' from each reference in the Constitution and appendices relating specifically to Panel Members eligibility for the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman, so that the positions are open to all Panel Members.

3 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Two nominations were received for the position of Vice-Chairman. Councillor Dadds being proposed by Councillor Heard and seconded by Councillor Shead and Councillor Ricci being proposed by Councillor Stalker and seconded by Councillor Garnett, there being no other nominations it was

Resolved:

That Councillor David Dadds and Councillor Frankie Ricci be duly elected as Vice-Chairmen of the Panel.

4 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.
2. The following apologies were noted:
 - Cllr Deakin, Co-opted Member for Balance Appointment
 - Cllr Sutton, Uttlesford District Council
 - Cllr McWilliams, Tendring District Council
 - Cllr McGurran, Co-opted Member for Balance Appointment
 - Sheila Murphy, Co-opted independent Member
3. The following declarations were made by Members:

- Councillor Frankie Ricci declared a Code Interest as his step-son was currently a serving police officer. Councillor Ricci participated fully in the meeting.
- Councillor Mark Heard declared a Code Interest as his son was currently a serving police officer. Councillor Heard participated fully in the meeting.

5 Balanced Appointment Objective Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/09/22 advising that the composition of the Panel did not fully comply with the statutory 'balanced appointment objective' and setting out the proposed steps necessary to achieve it for this Panel period.

Resolved:

1. The Panel applies to the Home Secretary for permission to co-opt one Labour Member and one Liberal Democrat Member for one year.
2. The Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Groups each be invited to put forward suitable nominations to fill these posts in the event that permission is granted.
3. That a report be brought back to the Panel as soon as we have heard from the Home Secretary.

6 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 22 March 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

With regard to actions arising from the last meeting, the Panel had asked for more detail on a number of issues. The Commissioner gave an update on the information that had been circulated to the Panel outside of the meeting on the following issues:

- Detail on the increase in hazardous materials incidents
- Fuller detail on incidents where response times were over 25mins
- Timeline of the review of causation factors for pumping appliance availability
- Impact of long Covid in managing longer term sickness
- Moving the location of knife bins – it was noted that there was a balance needed between ensuring they were in the correct location and people knowing where they were. Further detail on how successful the bins were in certain locations would be provided outside of the meeting.
- The use of social media to report crimes – it was clarified that whilst there were options for online reporting, live chat and other established ways of reporting crime, the most effective way to report a crime remained via the emergency 999 service.

7 Questions to the Chairman from members of the public

There were none.

8 Review of Terms of Reference: Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee

The Panel received report EPFCP/10/22 setting out the revised Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules for the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee.

An amendment to Recommendation 3.1 was proposed by Councillor Playle and seconded by Councillor Shead, which sought to include the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service in the definition of Integrity with regard to behaving in a way that commands public trust and confidence and in the definition of Ethics, setting out the behaviours, values and beliefs. On being put to the vote the amendment was passed and it was

Resolved:

1. That the revised Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules be adopted in the form appended to the Panel report EPFCP/10/22, subject to the inclusion of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service in the definition of Integrity with regard to behaving in a way that commands public trust and confidence and in the definition of Ethics, setting out the behaviours, values and beliefs.
2. That the following four members of the Panel be appointed to the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee –
 - Councillor Ian Shead
 - John Gili-Ross
 - Councillor Lynda McWilliams
 - Councillor David Dadds

9 Review of Terms of Reference: Complaints Sub-Committee

The Panel received report EPFCP/11/22 setting out the revised Complaints process for the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Complaints Sub-Committee, which also sought agreement to identify members to sit on the Sub-Committee as required for 2022-23.

Resolved:

1. That the revised Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Complaints process, including the terms of reference of the Complaints Sub-Committee, be adopted in the form appended to the Panel report EPFCP/11/22.
2. That the following Panel Members be nominated to a pool of members for 2022-23 from which membership of the Complaints Sub-Committee will be drawn as and when a meeting is convened –
 - Councillor Jude Deakin

- Councillor Ian Shead
- John Gili-Ross
- Councillor Mike Garnett
- Councillor Lynda McWilliams
- Councillor David Dadds
- Sheila Murphy

10 Police and Crime Plan Performance Measures - Quarter 4 2021-2022

The Panel received report EPFCP/12/22 which provided an overview of Essex Police's progress in delivering the priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan, based on data and other information to the end of March 2022.

The Commissioner introduced the report and clarified that this was the last quarter of reporting against the priorities in the Police and Crime Plan, as extended for 2020/21. A new Performance Framework would be established for the new Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024 for future reporting. The Commissioner drew attention to some of the highlights in the report such as the increase in investigations via the Resolution Centre, the decrease in call waiting times, volunteering and the cadets and the disruptions against Organised Crime groups. The Commissioner also outlined the areas for a continued focus such as the Resolution Centre call waiting times, the impact of court delays and the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads.

In response to questions and concerns raised by the Panel the following points were made:

- It was confirmed that a review and evaluation of the overall Police and Crime Plan as extended to 2021 had been done. A summary of the outcome and how to access the information could be provided to the Panel.
- Concern was raised regarding the increase in crime figures for a number of areas relating to serious violence, domestic abuse and protecting children and vulnerable people, covering a number of the Police and Crime Plan priority areas. In response it was explained that there were a number of interventions, programmes, areas of focus and investment to try to tackle these areas and there was no single solution. Some areas of success were highlighted and the impacts from Covid were explained. However, there were specific areas such as drug-driven violence, rape and serious sexual assault, violence against women and girls and domestic abuse where more focus was needed. It was explained that improvements had been made in supporting victims in some of these areas, but there had been less progress in dealing with the perpetrators and more investment was needed.
- Members sought more information on the impact of the sentencing policy, in response it was explained that there were some difficulties in the justice system, with delays, prisons being very full and a probation service which was struggling following a restructure.

Priority 1 - More Local, Visible and Accessible Policing

- The number of Specials had not doubled in line with the commitment under priority 1, however partly that was due to the focussed recruitment to regulars with a number of specials joining the regulars, but it was the second largest special constabulary in the Country.
- In response to a question raised regarding the impact on recruitment of low starting pay and competing in the current job market, it was reported that there was a good level of recruitment. Following the precept increase there had been an increase in the South East area allowance. The biggest competitor for recruitment was the Metropolitan Police and some of their recruitment incentives may have an impact on recruitment but currently it was considered to be at a healthy level.
- More information was sought on the encouragement of online reporting. It was confirmed that there was a steady level of reporting in this way. The live chat had improved the process and diverted calls away from the 101 service which had in turn improved those call waiting times. Investment was required to make improvements in the future. These services were promoted regularly through social media and people were encouraged to report crime in different ways. A lot of work was done through District Engagement Plans, identifying and encouraging people to report in different ways. There was a 'More Time to Fight Crime' social media campaign to run intensely over the summer.
- With regard to more local, visible and accessible policing, relating to the commitments in the Plan, there were concerns raised regarding the level of non-attendance at incidents and particularly the impact on confidence in the police, public perception and future reporting of crime. It was confirmed that these issues were looked at through the Performance and Scrutiny Board on a reasonably regular basis. The focus of the Plan was towards prevention to stop things happening in the first place, rather than solely focussing on improved response. Having fewer crimes and being able to focus on solving those crimes was the focus. The initiatives and teams that had been put in place to support this focus were outlined to the Panel. The Commissioner felt assured that confidence in the Police was at a good level and people were not discouraged from reporting crime as it was increasing. It was explained that all requests for contact were managed through the Contact Management Command and assessed against THRIVE – Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement, with trained staff assessing how reported issues should be appropriately dealt with. Responses could be physical or remote through the Resolution Centre, which had increased responses. Some clearly defined offences would always be allocated for attendance, the level of attendance was high on those cases, but it was acknowledged that there had been cases where this policy had not been met. Panel Members expressed the view that they felt a more focussed look at these issues was needed to gain a better understanding of the service and how this fitted with public perception and Priority 1 of the Police and Crime Plan.
- A request was made for advice on applying for the Safer Streets funding. An update was given on the process and planning for the next round.

- An update was provided on the education programme, with particular reference to attending schools. It was advised that the biggest impact had been the joint education teams who had made a number of visits in the last year. Particular issues were being addressed where they had been highlighted. Relationships were being developed with schools and there were a number of initiatives highlighted.

Priority 4 – Reverse the Trend in Serious Violence

- Clarity was sought on issues around the reporting of sexual offences and conviction rates. It was explained that in terms of taking cases to Court, there was a focus on taking more cases, even if the success rate was slightly less. Where there was a good evidential base, the success rate was significantly better. Work was ongoing around issues of disclosure and victims being concerned about the level of intrusion when providing evidence for Court cases.

Resolved:

- That the Panel received and noted the report.
- That the Panel consider adding an item to the Forward Work Plan to take a more focussed look at performance against Priority 1 – More Local, Visible and Accessible Policing (see Minute no.14, below).

11 The 2023/24 Budget Setting Process

The Panel received report EPFCP/13/22 which provided the Panel with an outline of the 2023/24 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 (Essex Police).

Resolved:

1. That the Panel received and noted the report and accepted the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's invitation to participate in this process through the creation of a 2023/24 Budget Setting Working Group of the Panel, in line with the process set up for 2022/23 budget setting.
2. That the membership would be confirmed and the dates would be provided to the Working Group.

12 Review of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority's Constitution

The Panel received report EPFCP/14/22 which invited comments from members of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the contents of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority's updated Constitution prior to its adoption.

Resolved:

That following review of the proposed updated Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority's Constitution, there were no recommendations on its content and the updated Constitution was noted.

*** Variation in the Order of Business**

The Chairman proposed a variation in the order of business to take the PFCC Decisions report as the last item of business and the other items in the order of the agenda. Having been proposed by Councillor Dadds and seconded by Councillor Barber it was

Resolved:

That the order of business be varied to take the PFCC Decisions item as the last item of business and the other items in the order of the agenda.

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

Due to time limitations, the Commissioner's update would be provided in writing and published on the Council website.

Resolved:

That the report be received in writing after the meeting.

14 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Annual Report

The Panel received report EPFCP/16/22 which provided an overview of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel's (the Panel) activities during the 2021/22 municipal year and also set out the Forward Work Plan for 2022/23.

Resolved:

1. That the Panel received and noted the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel Annual Report for 2021/22.
2. That the Panel reviewed the Forward Work Plan and agreed the addition of a focussed look at performance against Priority 1 – More Local, Visible and Accessible Policing.

15 Essex PFCP Grant Claim and Outturn Report - 2021/22

The Panel received report EPFCP/17/22 updating the Panel on the outturn position against the grant to be filed with the Home Office prior to the deadline of 31 July 2022. 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.

16 Report of the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee

The Panel received report EPFCP/18/22 which provided the minutes of the meeting of the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee which met on 22 March 2022.

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

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

Due to time limitations, the Chairman's update would be provided in writing and published on the Council website.

Resolved:

That the report be received in writing after the meeting.

18 Dates of Future Meetings

The Panel received report EPFCP/19/22 setting out the proposed schedule of meeting dates for 2022-23.

Resolved:

That the schedule of meeting dates be agreed as –

- Thursday 21 July 2022 – 2:00pm
- Thursday 29 September 2022 – 2:00pm
- Thursday 8 December 2022 – 2:00pm
- Thursday 7 February 2023 – 10:00am
- Thursday 20 February 2023 – 2:00pm (Reserve date)

19 Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 21 July 2022.

20 Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Decisions Report

The Panel received and raised questions on report EPFCP/15/22 which provided information about financial and strategic decisions made by the PFCC.

The Panel sought further clarification on the following decisions:

- Chelmsford Refurbishment Overspend
- Emergency Services Network Programme Detailed Investment Business Case Stage 2

Resolved:

That the Panel received and noted the report.

There being no urgent business, the meeting closed at 4.50pm.