

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1 at County Hall, Chelmsford on Thursday 29 September 2022

**Present:**

**Councillor**

David Dadds  
Keith Barber  
Russ Savage  
Mike Garnett  
Mark Heard  
Ian Shead  
Lynda McWilliams  
Gary Collins  
Maggie Sutton  
Aidan McGurran

**Representing**

Basildon Borough Council  
Brentwood Borough Council  
Castle Point Borough Council  
Harlow District Council  
Maldon District Council  
Southend-on-Sea City Council  
Tendring District Council  
Thurrock Council  
Uttlesford District Council  
Co-opted Member for Balanced Appointment

**Co-opted Independent Members**

John Gili-Ross (Chairman)  
Sheila Murphy

**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)
Darren Horsman	Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement, OPFCC
Rick Hylton	Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Janet Perry	Chief Financial Officer, OPFCC
Andy Prophet	Deputy Chief Constable
Emma Tombs	Democratic Services Manager

**1 Membership, Apologies 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 Lager, Chelmsford City Council
  - Cllr Ricci, Braintree District Council
  - Cllr Playle, Essex County Council
  - Cllr Stalker, Epping Forest District Council

- Cllr Lilley, Colchester Borough Council
- Cllr Williams, Rochford District Council
- Cllr Deakin, co-opted Member

3. The following declarations were made by Members:

- Councillor Lynda McWilliams declared a Code Interest as her son was currently a serving police officer and her granddaughter was a serving special police officer. Councillor McWilliams 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.

## **2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following minor amendment:

- Page 5, Minute 7, 4<sup>th</sup> bullet point – amend 'Birmingham' Trent University to read 'Nottingham' Trent University.

## **3 Questions to the Chairman from members of the Public**

There were none.

## **4 Balanced Appointment Objective**

The Panel received report EPFCP/24/22 which updated the Panel on the response received from the Home Office in relation to achieving the Balanced Appointment Objective and recommended that the Panel make the necessary appointments.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, thanked Cllr Lee Scordis for his work on the Panel.

### **Resolved:**

1. That the co-opted members of the panel to achieve the balanced appointment objective were with immediate effect Councillor Aidan McGurran (Labour) and Councillor Jude Deakin (Liberal Democrat).
2. That the co-options remain in place until a further report is received by the Panel as soon as practicable after the elections held in May 2023, ideally at the Annual Meeting of the Panel, in order to make any co-options that may be needed to achieve political balance at that time.

## **5 Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Annual Report and Statement of Assurance**

The Panel received report EPFCP/25/22 which provided the Panel with the draft Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2021-2022.

Prior to the Panel meeting, a workshop had been held with Panel Members to provide feedback to the Commissioner on an earlier draft of the report. The feedback had been incorporated and the changes were listed in the covering report. The Panel had a statutory duty to review and scrutinise the report and make a report or recommendations.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- Targeted diversity and recruitment. It was explained that recruitment was open to all, however there was a focus on helping to broaden representation and ensure that the service better reflected all communities within Essex.
- In response to further questions about the recruitment process, it was explained that the aim was to reach a wider pool of potential candidates to boost applications from minority groups. Tools such as targeted advertising were used. However, all potential candidates had to meet the required standards for employment and were subject to the same assessments and recruitment processes. There were no specific targets set, the overall aim was to be representative of the community.

**Resolved:**

That members of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel noted the draft Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2021-2022 and provided feedback to the Commissioner.

## **6 Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Annual Report**

The Panel received report EPFCP/26/22 which provided the Police, Fire and Crime Panel with the PFCC's draft Annual Report for 2021 - 2022.

Prior to the Panel meeting, a workshop had been held with Panel Members to provide feedback to the Commissioner on an earlier draft of the report. The feedback had been incorporated and the changes were listed in the covering report. The Panel had a statutory duty to review and scrutinise the report and make a report or recommendations.

During the discussion, the Panel asked questions and sought clarification on the following issues:

- More detail on the reserves held on behalf of partners and third parties was provided which related almost exclusively to the proceeds of crime or moneys held pending clarification.
- Police legitimacy and working within the justice system in terms of police effectiveness. The Commissioner explained that legitimacy was fundamental to British Policing. The Police are part of the justice system and if that system is compromised then police effectiveness is frustrated. Issues around sentencing were acknowledged and areas of change

following lobbying were identified. The Covid pandemic had resulted in significant delays within the court system, particularly in Crown Court.

- The Commissioner clarified some of the aims of increasing collaboration, particularly around the prevention agenda.
- Concern was raised regarding how the Plan priorities linked with priorities in local areas and the appropriateness of a four year plan. In response it was explained that the Police and Crime Plan was a strategic long-term plan for change. In the previous Police and Crime Plan there had been a focus on particular issues such as anti-social behaviour, where targeted interventions and strategies had been successful in reducing those crimes. The current Police and Crime Plan focussed on priorities such as drug-driven violence, domestic violence and violence against women and girls, where more resource was needed. A workshop session to better understand the current Police and Crime Plan priorities was suggested by the Commissioner, which the Panel welcomed.
- Concern was expressed regarding how the priorities fit with the crime data and in particular detection and solved rates. In response it was explained that the crime data shows red in the violent crime areas which are the areas of focus in the 12 priorities and where the most resource is being committed and interventions were needed. The area of dog theft, although having a low number of occurrences, was an area of significant public concern and through the priority, work had already been done to improve the situation with little resource required. In other areas of crime, interventions and resources were already in place to tackle those areas and reduce the numbers.
- On public satisfaction and confidence figures, particularly for those that have experienced crime and anti-social behaviour, the Commissioner outlined the external surveys that were undertaken and other sources of feedback. Reporting on victim feedback and the gap in confidence was an acute area of focus for the service.
- On vision zero, the Commissioner confirmed that he considered that zero deaths from road traffic was achievable. Every death was preventable by changing behaviours and environments and also ensuring active and passive safety in vehicles.
- Concern was raised that the priorities in the Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024 did not include local, visible and accessible policing and that as a result intelligence and knowledge was being lost. Also, the impact on public satisfaction and confidence when the police did not attend incidents. The Commissioner advised that he considered that local, visible and accessible policing was captured within the Plan as part of the first priority on investing more in preventing crime. The Commissioner set out his commitment to crime prevention and how he saw that being achieved through resources, problem-solving interventions and partnership working.
- The Commissioner clarified that changing the long-term strategic plan was a complex process that would require a further round of public consultation and was not something that he was minded to do.
- Specific issues for rural and isolated communities were raised. The Commissioner advised that new legislation had helped for some issues

and the Rural Engagement Teams had been hugely successful and doubled in size. Partnership working was also key in this area.

- Issues were raised regarding investigative skills and solved rates. In response it was explained that a key element was ensuring that crimes were being reported and that had improved. The Commissioner explained some of the challenges with investigating, building a case and taking certain cases to court, particularly where a victim was unwilling to pursue the case. The work that was being done to address these challenges was also explained.
- The issue of police visibility and the benefits of PCSO's was raised. In response the Commissioner outlined what had been done to improve police visibility, particularly with the introduction of the Rural Engagement teams and Town Centre teams and the work being done to tackle crime in hotspot areas.

The Panel developed a number of points of feedback which were recommended to the Commissioner for consideration of inclusion in the final version of the report:

- Clarify the reference to the comparison trend period from five year to four year on page 5 of Annex A – PFCC Annual Report.
- Change the reference to a "longer term downward trend" on page 5 of Annex A.
- Corrections to the error messages on page 8 of Annex A.
- Correction to the number of new officers on page 11 of Annex A.
- Clarify the baseline in the Safer Essex Roads Partnership and alter 2002-2009 to 2005-2009 on page 35 of Annex A.
- Include the increase in collaboration priority in the performance data table on page 47 of Annex A.
- Highlight local, visible and accessible policing in the priorities.

It was agreed that further information would be provided to the Panel on the following issues:

- Detail on attendance and non-attendance by Police for particular crimes would be fed into the Panel's focussed work on this issue.
- Detail on the numbers of funded PCSOs
- Clarification regarding the rules governing the funded PCSOs.

### **Resolved:**

That members of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel noted the draft Annual Report for 2021-2022 and provided feedback to the Commissioner that he will consider for inclusion in the final version of the report which will be provided to members of the Panel 48 hours prior to publication.

## **7 2023-24 Budget - Baseline Challenge**

The Panel received report EPFCP/27/22 which laid out the background issues, the current assumptions, and the baseline challenge in setting the 2023/24 budgets for both Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Services.

The Commissioner introduced the report highlighting the challenges to the budget, including pay negotiations and the current assumptions.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- Whether the reversal of the National Insurance increase would assist with the budget. It was explained that funding had been made available for that increase on the employers side and it was unknown whether that funding would be rolled back, or could be used to invest in services.
- Whether there were schemes in place to assist employees with the current cost of living crisis. It was confirmed that the service was doing what it could to assist employees, however the uncertainty around funding made it difficult to make long-term commitments. Work had been done on reviewing mileage rates and ensuring that staff were aware of schemes and assistance available. It was acknowledged that staff were feeling the pressure and that moving forward a focus on ensuring a fair funding settlement would be key.

### **Resolved:**

The Panel noted the background issues, the current assumptions, and the baseline challenge, in setting the 2023/24 budgets for Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Services.

## **8 Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Decisions Reports**

The Panel received and raised questions on report EPFCP/28/22 which provided information about financial and strategic decisions made by the PFCC.

The Panel sought further clarification on the following decisions:

### **Appendix A – Police Decisions**

- 071 - PAC Stage 2 Capital Bid – no details provided
- 073 - Licence to Alter Building – no details provided
- 082 - Purchase of software – no details provided

### **Appendix B – Fire and Rescue Decisions**

- 027 - Renewal of the Firelink Contract 2022/23

The Commissioner explained that the decisions which contained no detail were due to operational sensitivities, but if there was a specific question from a Panel Member, information could be provided to that Member in a written or hard copy format. Assurance was given regarding the robust process followed to ensure that the publication status was as open and transparent as possible.

In response to a general query about recovering the cost of a drug-driving lab report from a perpetrator who had been convicted, the Commissioner agreed to look into the situation.

**Resolved:**

That the Panel received and noted the report.

**9 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:

- A letter from the new Home Secretary to Policing leaders had been received setting out the ambitions and focus.
- The Commissioner was pleased with progress in delivering expansion which will be at 3,755 by the end of March 2023. It was noted that there was a higher level of transfers out of Essex Police to other police services mainly due to the incentive payment that the Metropolitan Police was offering to transferees, which was an additional challenge.
- There was a further uplift from the Ministry of Justice in terms of victim support services and for male rape support. Additionally further funding underpinning serious violence interventions.
- Progress would be reported to the Panel at its next meeting regarding the HMICFRS Report.

**Resolved:**

That the verbal report was noted.

**10 National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels Update**

The Panel received a verbal update from the Chairman of the Panel on a recent Local Government Association Police (Fire) and Crime Panels webinar covering a number of issues.

**Resolved:**

That the verbal report was noted.

**11 Forward Work Plan**

The Panel received report EPFCP/29/22 setting out the planned business of the Panel.

**Resolved:**

That the Panel received the report, agreeing the addition of an item discussed under the agenda item on the PFCC's Annual Report, to hold a workshop to better understand the current Police and Crime Plan priorities.

## **12 Date of Next Meeting**

The Panel noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 8 December 2022.

There being no urgent business, the meeting closed at 4:50pm.

**Chairman**