

Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel
Report of the Chairman of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel

To All Member Authorities

In accordance with agreed practice I am reporting on matters dealt with by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at its meeting on 23 September 2021.

The main items considered were:

Minutes Silence – Councillor Brian Edwards

The Panel held a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Brian Edwards.

Police and Crime Plan / Fire and Rescue Plan Update

The Commissioner updated the Panel on the progress made in developing his Police and Crime Plan and the Fire and Rescue Plan. He emphasised that there would be wide consultation with both partners and other bodies and that he was particularly interested in hearing from the public. Consultation would be with as many people from all areas of the community as possible.

The Panel thanked Mr Adams for his presentation and after a number of questions the following information was noted:

- Hard to reach groups such as BME groups would be encouraged to comment on the plan. It was hoped that every part of the community would be reached.
- A variety of methods of consultation would be used from social media to paper copies of the plan in libraries and public buildings.
- Those who don't have access to technology would still have a chance to respond.
- The plan would be subject to review if government direction changed. This was a particular issue should the current national review of the PFCC role make recommendations for the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), to changed or expanded.
- The plan would be reviewed annually, and progress monitored via this Panel.
- Parish and District Councils would be consulted, and all Councillors had already been emailed directly with contact information for both the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.
- The Police and Crime Plan would compliment the Police Force Plan and the Fire Service Plan and would aligned the two. The Commissioner stated that he may be asking for improvements in performance which may not be considered a priority for either service. Consultation would take place between services, but the priority would always be on Staffordshire residents.

The Commissioners Police and Crime Plan would be considered at the next formal meeting of the Panel on 25 October 2021.

Police Performance Update

The Commissioner had temporarily halted the public performance meetings with the Acting Chief Constable during the selection and interview period for the permanent Chief Constable. He explained that in holding the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer to account, the Commissioner would concentrate on the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan and the Fire and Rescue Plan; Statutory requirements; public satisfaction; recruitment and national indicator comparison.

It was intended to reintroduce the performance meetings on a quarterly basis for the Police Force and Biannually for Fire and Rescue Services.

Knife crime was part of the national indicators and was outlined in the report. Work was taking place with partners around serious crime, anti-terrorism/drug related crime/county lines to ensure that priorities were being targeted. There were good working relationships with all neighbouring forces including Derbyshire and Cheshire and similar statistical neighbours to ensure information was shared and lessons learnt.

The Commissioner informed the Panel that Police response and contact times would remain a priority and a separate piece of work was being undertaken to look at improving figures.

Following a question on road safety funding, Helen Fisher explained that there was a small budget for road safety schemes but there were plans to strengthen the partnership and put the community at the heart of activities by strengthening Community Speed Watch groups. Reducing accidents, including catching and removing criminals driving stolen cars or driving without insurance was also a priority. Extending the support provided and sharing equipment may enable improvements without the need for increased funding or more speed cameras. The Commissioner emphasised that road safety was a top priority for the public and would not be ignored. Further information on this review would be supplied to members at a later date. The possible reintroduction of powers for PCSO's to issue parking fines was discussed especially near to schools. It was explained that this was an operational matter, but the Commissioner would discuss this with the new Chief Constable.

A question was asked on a scheme carried out by Medway Police Force covering the issue of safer schools and reducing offending. The Commissioner explained that he was not familiar with the project but agreed that better results were found by keeping people out of the judicial/penal pathway. The way that reoffending was tackled would be considered by the Panel as part of the Police and Crime delivery update.

The Panel supported the priorities outlined by the Commissioner and felt that they were the ones that the public raise with them on a regular basis. Contact was a priority, however the pandemic was still a concern and the numbers contacting the force following the lifting of lockdown measures was a significant increase on previous years. Particular increases had been seen in missing persons, suicides, and mental health concerns.

Officer recruitment was progressing well. Different skills were required for different geographical areas and services and a more diverse workforce would help to support this.

Fire and Rescue Performance Update

The Panel received the performance report for the Fire and Rescue Service. It was noted that the plan was for 2020-2024 but would be reviewed annually to meet the changing needs of the service.

The additional work carried out by the service during the pandemic was discussed, particularly the work carried out with the Local Resilience Partners and the NHS mobile vaccination unit. The effects of Covid on staff members had been felt, particularly with the loss of a team member. The effect of long Covid on lung capacity was a national issue which would be monitored.

The Commissioner expressed concern that during the national discussions on Fire Officer pay, the four Commissioners who cover Police and Fire Services had not been invited to comment, but they had been for Police pay discussions. However, the local relationship with unions was considered to be positive and strong.

The safety of transient people and the work undertaken with landlords of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) was explored. It was explained that the fire service gave advice and guidance to the private sector and it was also a recommendation from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Following a question on the approach taken on checking the quality of work undertaken by the service, it was explained that the HMI were due to start an inspection and the Commission would pay particular attention to quality monitoring and risks.

Response times in some circumstances was not ideal. A hybrid of full and part time station/work force provision was needed and this need to be risk based and in the right location. This would be considered at a future meeting.

The Panel agreed to write to both the Fire and Rescue Service and the Police Force to thank them for all their work throughout the pandemic.

Progress report on appointment of Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable

The Commissioner reported that the selection process for both the Chief Constable and the Chief Fire Officer had been completed and the Commissioner was now in a position to refer his preferred candidates to the Panel for consideration at a confirmation hearing. The Chairman reported that a provisional date had been set for 12 October to consider the appointments

Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members

Members of the Panel questioned/sought the views of the Commissioner on the following issues and received the responses indicated:

Question/Issue	Response
Was there anything that could be done to improve Town Centre Policing in Newcastle as there was a perception of increased anti-social behaviour and intimidation?	The Commissioner would look at the concerns with local officers and report back to Councillor Heesom.
Had there been any progress in the development of a local Firing range?	This item was on the Panels Work Programme.
Rural wildlife crime (including livestock and farming equipment) was an issue in some parts of the County but it was not mentioned in any of the plans.	The Commissioner stated that responding to theft was a fundamental part of policing and was a priority. The term 'rural' may not have been used but it was covered in all plans.
Was there any guidance on working together to support and relocate travellers?	The Commissioner was keen to have a forum where all partners could come together to share their knowledge and expertise. It was noted that one consistent way of dealing with issues would be useful.
Could Neighbourhood watch forums be reinstated?	It was explained that as from 1 st October Safer Neighbourhood Panels would end and the Commissioner was looking at a new model of local engagement. He wanted to see the public and partners having a bigger voice and able to raise local concerns which was difficult under the current model.
The Chairman welcomed the recognition that the community need to have a voice in local policing and a means of raising concerns. A further comment was made on the need for clear policies and procedures, so it was clear who was responsible for which service/deliver of actions.	The Commissioner restated that this was being reviewed and brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

Webcast can be found at

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1150&MId=13737&Ver=4>

For more information on these meetings or on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in general please contact Mandy Pattinson e mail mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk

Details of Panel meetings are issued to contact officers in each of the District/Borough Councils in the County and Stoke-on-Trent City Council for posting on their own web sites.

Councillor Bernard Peters
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Chairman