

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 31 January 2022.

The main items considered were:

Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

A Member of the public asked the following questions:

1. How the changes forced by a) covid or b) covid regulations have impacted the budget for policing and fire.
2. Data demonstrating how prioritising the Sars Cov2 agenda has impacted any other operations of the police and fire services.

As the Commissioner had not been given the required 3 days' notice of the questions, it was agreed that a written response would be provided, and no debate took place on the item.

Proposed Police Budget and Precept 2022/23

The Commissioner introduced his report which set out the proposed budget and precept proposals for the Police and Crime element of his portfolio for 2022/23. He reported that the proposed budget/precept showed a total net revenue budget requirement of £233.072million (an increase of 10,997million) for 2022/23. The report also included details of the Home Office Police Grant for Staffordshire which had been set at £129.410 million, an increase of £6.993 million on the previous year. Other sources of funding were from the Police Pension Grant £1.825million; uplift ring-fenced grant £2.035 million; Council Tax freeze grant £3.541million; and Revenue Support Grant of £8.423million.

The use of £1.262 million of reserves to support the capital programme and the use of the reserves over a four year planning period to support the budget totalling £2.611m was explained.

The Commissioner was proposing to part fund the balance from Council Tax funding of £88.265,871 with an increase of 4.19% per annum (an increase of £10 per annum) increasing the Council tax to £248.57 p.a. per Band D property.

The Commissioner stated that he was confident that the proposed budget was adequate to deliver the services Staffordshire needs and would meet the services intended and his Police Fire and Crime Plan. He

acknowledged that the increase was the maximum this year it was hoped that there would be smaller increases in future years.

It was noted that there had been a longer term (3 year) commitment from Central Government this year enabling better planning. However, there was a concern over inflation and the economy which led to financial uncertainty in some areas.

It was explained that headline investments which would be made during the course of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) were above those provided for by Central Government. These included an Increasing Technology and Digital Capabilities; a modern and fit for purpose Policing Estate; a modern fit for purpose Police fleet; increased contact services capacity; IT capacity; and a change and transformation programme.

The Panel received a presentation from the Chief Finance Officer, which was considered along with the report which included the following:

1. Budget Report 2022/23 including MTFS
2. Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23
3. Reserves Strategy update
4. Capital Strategy and Capital Programme

The **Treasury Management Strategy** for 2022/23 set out proposals for the management of the Commissioner's cash flows, borrowing and investments and their associated risks.

The **Reserves Strategy update** paper considered the overall level of reserves held at 31 March 2021 and the forecast position at 31 March 2022.

The Commissioner presented his four-year **Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2025/26** (Including Minimum Revenue Provision Policy) set out the long-term capital investment and investment decisions.

Members asked for the rationale behind the decision to increase by the maximum allowed this year even though there had been a favourable government settlement and an increase in Council tax collection which should have increased funding. In response, the Commissioner explained that some of the funding would be used on service improvement, and he was looking to invest early in his term of office and to also support the new Chief Constable with his plans to change services. The plan was to keep Council Tax precept increases to less than inflation in the future, if possible.

Following a question on police numbers and officer visibility, the Commissioner confirmed that he appreciated that some people found a visible police presence reassuring. There would be more officers by 2023 and the majority of them would be going into community policing and response. However, officers had to be deployed in areas where they were needed. It was explained that the third year of the Governments uplift programme would see an additional 120 FTE officers in Staffordshire by 31 March 2023.

Traffic management and monitoring of speeding/drink driving etc. was being developed by the Commissioner and the specialist unit would be retained as would working arrangements with the West Midlands Region. Voluntary speed watch operations would be developed which should release more officer capacity and should see more volunteers working to address local issues under the control of local policing commanders.

It was explained that the Firing Range needed to be a fit for purpose training facility. There was still a need for a more complete business case which would consider all options including exploring shared facilities with other organisations.

The following information was also gained through questioning:

- In the assumptions section of the report, the insurance increase was listed as 30% which then reduced to 2.5% in future years. This figure was checked and reflected current market pressures particularly for motor insurance renewals.
- CCTV on various sites – it was explained that this was for security of the Police station sites not the towns.
- There would be an investment in new technologies to enable officers to perform more efficiently and be able to be fully engaged with other members of the team when working remotely.
- Under the Revenue Budget, third party payments had reduced from £24,344,000 in 20221/22 but reduced to £13,544,000 in future years. This was due to the way the Regional Crime Unit is structured. More information would be provided after the meeting.
- Under savings and efficiencies - Shared Estates disposals there was a cost reduction of £312,000. It was explained that this was a result of the sharing of estates with Fire services (predominantly Hanley and Tamworth).
- The future of Stafford Police station was questioned. It was explained that a local presence would remain in Stafford, but it was unsure at the present time, what was necessary and how it would be delivered.

When asked how success would be monitored, it was explained that over the following few months the Commissioner would be setting targets and arranging public performance meetings with the Chief Constable, where

performance would be monitored regularly. These updates would be available on the Commissioners public website and would include both local and national performance measures.

The Panel expressed some concern and advised the Commissioner that delivery of improvements should be visible and requested sight of the performance data, including risks and mitigation at the end of the first quarter.

The Panel adjourned to consider their response to the Commissioners budget and precept proposals. Upon reconvening the Panel agreed the recommendations in the report which included the proposed budget and Precept increase of 4.19% (£10.00 per annum, per household (Band D))

Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)

The Panel considered the following decisions which had been published on the Commissioners website since the last meeting:

1. Fire and Rescue Service Aerial Ladder Platform Vehicles 003
2. Police and Crime PSHE Co-ordinator 004
3. School Parking and Child School Road Safety 005
4. Hate crime service and anti social behaviour and mediation service 006
5. Body worn video and digital interview recording contract 007

There were no questions or debate on any of the decisions.

OPFCC Chief Executive appointment

The Commissioner informed the Panel that the recruitment of the Chief Executive post was continuing, and the Panel would be informed when a confirmation hearing was required.

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:

Chief inspector for both	Response
Newcastle – Street wardens. Could the Commissioner contribute to the cost of the Street wardens?	The police budget was not appropriate for this, but there was a Community Safety Forum which would be considering funding for local Community Safety partnerships. This may be a more appropriate place to consider the suggestion.

The throughput of officers and the need for continuity was mentioned.	Local Commanders were important to the service but it was acknowledged that good officers would be promoted.
How did the Commissioner feel about the Joint Commander role was working in Lichfield and Tamworth?	It was explained that there would be a move to Local Inspectors for both sites.
Was the Commissioner involved in sentencing and did he have any ability to influence?	No involvement directly, not directly but there was work with partners such as the Criminal Justice Board.
It was reported that part of the problem experienced in Newcastle had moved to Trent Vale.	It was positive that the incidents were being reported as this helped to provide accurate data so that police could investigate.
Councillor Adams thanked the Fire and Police Services for their help and support when dealing with the Leppard public house fire in Burslem.	

Webcast can be found at [Browse meetings - Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel - Staffordshire County Council](#)

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