

Minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Meeting held on 30 September 2024

Present: Bernard Peters (Chair)

Attendance	
Charlotte Atkins	Angela Loughran
Gill Heesom (Vice-Chair)	Vince Merrick
Zdzislaw Krupski	David Williams
	Paul Taylor

Also in attendance: Ben Adams and Louise Clayton.

Apologies: Adrian Bowen, Carol Dean, Majid Khan and Dave Robertson

Part One

15. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were reported at the meeting.

16. Minutes of the Panel meeting and Confirmation Hearing held on 24 June 2024

Resolved: That the minutes of the Panel meeting held on 24 June 2024 and the Confirmation hearing held on the same date, be approved and signed by the Chairman.

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

No decisions had been published since the last meeting.

18. Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

The Panel considered the questions ask by members of the public and the Commissioners written response.

The Commissioner provided a verbal response to the question from Ms Mallender. This is summarised as: The Commissioner continues to be concerned about the ongoing issues at Walley's Quarry and the impact on local residents. The Commissioner was involved in stakeholder meetings and was updated regularly. He felt that the statement on waste crime was not accurate and to his knowledge the police were not taking any

specific action related to that, other agencies may be more appropriate. The Police were there to protect peoples right to protest and to do so safely and legally. The role of the Commissioner is now well established and provides important local representation, particularly on community safety issues. This could be important in the coming months with the national discussion on Policing and Fire service matters being nationalised. The Commissioner felt that his role included representing local people in a way that would not be possible on a national level.

The Commissioners written response to Mr Stocks questions were attached to the agenda pack.

Resolved: That the questions asked, and the Commissioners responses be noted.

19. Commissioners Annual Report

The Annual Report was presented by the Commissioner who explained the progress made against his Local Police and Crime and Fire and Rescue Plans.

The Commissioner highlighted the following from his report:

- The regrettably lack of progress in some local partnership working, particularly around the wider local criminal justice aspect. He explained that the Commissioners influence was around that of ensuring that the polices response in preparing cases for court and this had seen process. In terms of court backlog, progress had not been as great as had been hoped for. Staffordshire had the second largest backlog in the county. This was challenging and work would continue with other agencies to improve the effectiveness of the system.
- In the main, the Commissioner was pleased with progress and the HMI inspection reports showed improvement. He felt that there was still room for improvement in the Police Service but every area of inspection had improved. The Fire and Rescue service report was viewed as excellent.
- Road safety, including ANPR Cameras, speeding and vehicle crime remained a priority.
- The recruitment target of additional police officers had been met with many now having completed their 3 year training.
- The relationship with the NHS continued to be strengthened.
- The 101 call service continued to be an area of concern.

In addition to the information provided in the written report, the Commissioners presentation and questioning from the Panel provided the following information:

- The work to improve relationships with partners such as the ICB was acknowledged, and it was hoped would continue.
- It was noted that anti-social behaviour had decreased in some areas of the County but not all. Where this problem still existed, the effect on residents was profound.
- Domestic violence remained an issue, particularly where children were involved.
- The training provided to new recruits was explained. It was acknowledged that it was a 3-year programme and dealt with some very complex situations.
- It was also explained that not all new recruits were young, some officers had moved from other roles in the force or PCSO's and brought with them a considerable amount of knowledge and experience.
- There was a pilot in the Stoke on Trent area on domestic violence, which included controlling behaviour. More information would be sent to the panel when available.
- Information on the gender balance for both new recruits and the force (both Fire and Police) was requested.
- The 'New Era' service, provided support to all sectors of the community before police intervention was needed. This was funded in partnership with Local Authorities and the Commissioner.
- IT fraud was an issue both nationally and locally.
- The increased number of attacks on police officers was raised as a concern. Personal protection was one of the first skills taught to new recruits and was a priority for the force. Recent incidents would be reviewed to ensure that everything was being done to protect officers.
- Visible policing was discussed. The Commissioner felt that visible and effective policing was not necessarily the same thing and that sometimes visible policing meant that officers were being pulled away from other work.
- The Commissioner informed the Panel that the inspection reports for both Fire and Rescue and Police had shown improvements. There was some anxiety over funding for the next few years which meant that the link between value for money and productivity was increasingly important. The results of the recent inspections were listed in the report later on the agenda and could be found on the Commissioners website.
- Local officer stability was raised, with officer turnover being viewed locally as an issue. The Commissioner felt that this was less of a problem now than it had been in the past and that it could be viewed as a positive as officers were being promoted and taking with them valuable experience and knowledge of the local area.

New officers also provided an opportunity for new ideas and ways of working.

- The 3-crew fire response service was still being piloted for on call crews. These were normally used as a backup response and wouldn't normally be expected to be working alone. The Commissioner explained that the aim was to get to incidents quicker and provide support. The results of the pilot were not prejudged but the service was provided in consultation with staff and crews and appeared to be well received and had improved officer retention and recruitment. Crews of 3 would not normally tackle fires however, there had been one incident recently where the crew had made a decision to enter a burning building. This decision had been based on their own professional judgement and their safety evaluation. This was not normally the standard response however, it had saved lives. The incident was being reviewed to ensure that officers safety was not compromised. It was acknowledged that the Fire service Unions were concerned over what was called the "moral dilemma" where officers may feel obliged to respond and can go against safety protocol. The aim of the pilot was to make safe the situation until a larger crew attended. The results of the pilot, including the impact, if any, on mental health of the crews would come to the panel in due course.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That the Panel respond formally to the Annual report including the feedback provided during the meeting.
- c) The Panel requested information on the gender balance for both new recruits and the force(s) as a whole (both Fire and Police).
- d) More information was requested on the pilot in the Stoke on Trent area on responding to domestic violence.
- e) The results of the 3-crew pilot, including the impact, if any, on mental health of the crews, be considered by the panel in due course.

20. Development of the Police & Crime Plan and the Fire & Rescue Plan 2024-2028

The Commissioner introduced his report which provided the Panel with an update on the Police and Crime Plan and the Fire and Rescue Plan. The plans were for the period 2024 – 2028 and were currently draft and out for consultation. The report summarised the consultation process.

The Commissioner reminded the Panel whilst the plans did not direct the service operations, they did reflect local issues and both the Chief Constable, and the Chief Fire Officer had been consulted and took the

plans into account when planning the delivery of their service.

Following the Commissioners introduction, the Panel asked questions, and the following information was gathered. This was in addition to that provided in the written report:

- Knife crime was a concern to the public however it was reported that a large proportion of incidents were domestic and not attacks on strangers in the street.
- Battery fires, including electric scooters was a national issue and needed some guidance from central government.
- Climate changes and the challenges and demands on the Fire Service due to the need to respond to fires and floods was raised. The Commissioner agreed to relook at this in the plan to ensure that enough priority was placed on it. It was acknowledged that tackling flooding required a partnership approach which included prevention work such as gully maintenance, house building plans, drainage etc.
- The Anti-Social Behaviour pilot which involved wardens with increased powers working with police was still on going.
- Police officer attendance at resident meeting was important and should happen but other priorities meant that this was not always possible. Members were asked to inform the Commissioner if nonattendance happened on a regular basis.
- The consultation timeline and public responses to date was noted. Some members reported that they did not recall receiving information on the consultation and had struggled to find it on social media. The Commissioner agreed to look at the way elected members were consulted.

Resolved: That the Police and Crime Plan and the Fire and Rescue Plan update report be noted.

21. Fire Safety Plan 2020 - 2024 Update

The Commissioner introduced his report which provided the Panel with an update on the Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan which included the Community Risk Management Plan. The report set out the Commissioners priorities and progress to date.

It was felt that a number of questions asked under previous reports had related to the safety plan and so were not repeated. This included the 3-crew pilot.

It was noted that the latest HMICFRS inspection had updated some of the information in the report. The inspection report could be found on the Commissioners website.

Resolved: That the Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan update report

was noted.

22. Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members

There was a statement made that the partnership working was very encouraging and the best way to try to solve some of the issues facing the county.

23. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

The Panels next meeting would be held on 18 November 2024.

Resolved: That the work programme be noted.

Chair