

Minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Meeting held on 29 April 2019

Present: Stephen Sweeney (Chairman)

Carl Bennett
Paul Darby
Ann Edgeller
Simon Gaskin

Keith Walker
Jill Waring
Ashley Yeates

Apologies: Randolph Conteh, Stephen Doyle, Brian Edwards and Peter Jackson

PART ONE

47. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

48. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2019

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

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

Details were submitted of decisions published by the Commissioner since the last Panel meeting.

Responding to members' requests for additional information on decision number 13 (2018/19) authorised implementation of Phase 2 of the Niche Records Management System at a cost of £12.977million (total project cost £17.179million), the Commissioner reported that the system would bring together information currently managed by numerous individual systems into one System, improving information management and sharing with other agencies.

Decision number 15 (2018/19) returned Custody Detention Services to in-house provision as the Commissioner felt that this would give greater flexibility in the use of resources. Discussing the outsourcing of services, the Commissioner reported his view that the delivery method for each service had to be considered on merit.

50. Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

There were no questions for members of the public on this occasion.

51. Procedure of Handling Complaints against the Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner - Review

The Secretary reported on a review of the Panel's Complaints Procedure for the handling of complaints against the Commissioner or his Deputy. The review had been

necessary to reflect the extension of the Panel's remit to include the Commissioner's Fire governance role and to ensure that a recently published Advice Note from the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) was being complied with.

A revised draft Complaints Procedure was submitted which, in the main, sought to better explain the scope of the Panel's role and responsibility for complaints handling.

RESOLVED – That the revised Complaints Procedure be approved.

52. Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire, 2017-2020 - Update

The Commissioner presented an update on the progress of projects and initiatives under his 'Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire' strategy. Particular points highlighted/discussed were:

Crime levels – from recently published statistics, crime levels overall appeared to be stabilising however, as previously reported, the nature of those crimes was becoming increasingly complex which presented challenges when assessing year on year performance. Whilst the Commissioner reported that the Victims Gateway was performing well, supporting those affected by approximately 50,000-60,000 instances to date, members queried the organisation of that service and their use of national expertise rather than local resources.

As part of Early Intervention work the SPACE youth activity scheme had been particularly successful.

Questioned on the possible introduction of a standard CCTV system in Town Centres across the County, the Commissioner reported that after investing considerable resource into promoting that wish, he had abandoned the initiative due to limited take-up. He agreed to contact Council Leaders for their views on reviving the proposal, stressing that he would not pursue anything without commitment for all parties.

Modern Policing – A key element was the collaboration between the Policing and Fire and Rescue Services which would streamline support services and release resources for frontline services. Additionally the contract with Boeing for transformation of the IT services throughout the Police Force would significantly improve service delivery.

The Estates review would also be a major contributory factor as outdated buildings would be replaced by new facilities, on a shared basis where appropriate, or different operational ways of being accessible for the public. Responding to queries for members, the Commissioner reported on discussions being held with the PFI providers for Community Fire Stations in Staffordshire regarding their possible dual use. Many of the traditional reasons for the public needing face to face contact with the Police Force were now dealt with on-line, significantly reducing the need for dedicated premises.

Addressing concerns from the Panel on the effect which the closure of Police Stations might have on the level of assistance available for people with mental health problems, the Commissioner stressed that for some time the help provided to people in such a situation had been via joint working with Mental Health professionals and involved the use of more suitable venues, eg designated Places of Safety. He was involved in

national level discussions on the improvement of support for people with mental health difficulties.

Public Confidence – Panel members questioned the Commissioner’s decision to take in house the responsibility for administration of Safer Neighbourhood Panels, including the recruitment of members. Panels were an important means of holding the Force to account and provided a link between the Force and the community. The Commissioner referred to the varying effectiveness of the Panels and his wish to achieve consistency in the quality of their performance.

The apparently limited support given to Neighbourhood Watch schemes was questioned. The Commissioner explained that the SMART alerts system reached out to the wider community at less cost. He was happy to consider ways of helping Neighbourhood Watch schemes to embrace and build on the SMART system provided there were no additional cost implications.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted and the Commissioner be requested to include the following items in his update report to the next Panel meeting:

- The progress of the IT Transformation Contract with Boeing
- The review/rationalisation of the Police Estate and possible shared use of facilities
- The work of Victim Support and the sources of their expert advisers
- The views of Council Leaders on the viability of a cross county CCTV scheme
- The Commissioner’s Mental Health Strategy

53. Fire and Rescue Plan 2019/20 & SFRS Corporate Safety Plan 2017-2020 - Update

The Commissioner reminded the Panel that to ensure that he was able to familiarise himself satisfactorily with the work and responsibilities of the Fire and Rescue Service/Authority prior to drawing up any proposals for its future, he had formally adopted the Fire and Rescue Plan 2019/20, as produced by the former Fire and Rescue Authority. The need for a new Plan would align with the next elections for a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. The next Panel meeting would be consulted on a draft Plan which would seek to address future financial challenges whilst setting out the future strategic vision, priorities and objectives.

The Panel considered a summary progress of the Fire and Rescue Service delivery of projects and services under its three priorities: Education and Engagement, Community Safety and Well Being, and Planning, Resilience and Response.

Referring to the Community Sprinkler Project under which the Service aimed to secure the fitting of automatic sprinklers in all residential buildings with five or more storeys in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, the Commissioner voiced his support for the installation of sprinklers at the construction stage and was currently investigating how he could contribute to campaigns for changes to both legislation and to the attitude adopted by the construction sector.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

54. Staffordshire Police/Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service - Governance and Collaboration Update

Presenting an update on collaboration between the Policing and Fire and Rescue Services, the Commissioner referred to his wish to create environments which facilitated closer working, for example through shared support services. Consultation was underway on the restructuring of enabling services with a view to changes being implemented by late Summer 2019. Whilst praising the positive approach being adopted by all involved, the Commissioner acknowledged that uncertainty created concern and therefore the pace of any change needed to be carefully managed.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

55. Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members

There were no additional questions to the Commissioner on this occasion.

56. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

RESOLVED – That with amendments to reflect decisions at this meeting, the Panel's Work Programme be approved.

Chairman