

**Minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Meeting held on 28
January 2019**

Present: Stephen Sweeney (Chairman)

Carl Bennett	Peter Jackson
Randolph Conteh	Mr K. Walker (Co-Optee)
Paul Darby (Co-Optee)	Jill Waring
Ann Edgeller	Ashley Yeates
Brian Edwards	

Also in attendance: Susan Finney (Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel)

Apologies: Stephen Doyle and Simon Gaskin

PART ONE

27. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

28. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2018

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel meeting held on 29 October 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

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

Details of decisions taken and published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (The Commissioner) had been circulated to members.

Reference was made to decision no.13(2018/19) to approve funding of £12.977million for Phase 2 of the Niche Implementation Project (the total cost of which was £17.179million). The Commissioner was asked if the Project fell within the £100million/10 year IT Transformation contract held with Boeing. Confirming that to be the case, the Commissioner agreed to report to Panel on the progress of the Boeing contract.

RESOLVED – That the decisions be noted and the Commissioner report to a future meeting of the Panel on the achievements and performance of the Boeing contract to date.

30. Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

The following questions were presented on behalf of members of other local authorities and the Commissioner responded as indicated:

1 From Councillor T Clements (Tamworth)

Q - We get told on a regular basis that crime is down in Tamworth, however having been the victim of crime and using the 101 Service I believe that people get fed up of waiting to be answered. In my experience it can take over 20 mins for the call to be answered. So my questions are:

1. do people actually bother reporting anymore;
2. is the fear of crime actually greater than the crime itself?

A - Sorry to hear you have been a victim of crime. It is important that 101 is only used as a non-emergency number and, as such, at times there can be delays but there is also a call back facility which can be used to avoid waiting. It is not clear when you experienced the 20min wait but 101 is generally performing the best it has for three years. The 999 service is performing well, being answered 93% of the time in under 10 seconds.

341,000 calls to 101 have been made over the last 12 months, an average of 934 a day and it is estimated over 30% are actually calls that should be dealt with by other agencies, not policing. This has remained at broadly the same level compared to the previous year. The proportion of calls abandoned has also reduced to 8% which again is below the average for the past 3 years.

Independent satisfaction surveys with victims of crime show that 93% were satisfied with how easy it was to contact the police. The same survey for victims of anti-social behaviour show that 83% were satisfied. The level of incidents and crimes reported to Staffordshire Police relating to the Tamworth area have slightly reduced over the past 3 years indicating that people remain willing and able to report crime.

My view is that levels of crime in some parts of the UK that is reported through TV and media is highly likely to increase the fear of crime beyond the level of actual crime in most, but not all, areas. The reassurance and community engagement that police are doing more of, I hope, will help address that where it is an issue.

2.From Councillor J Garner (Stoke –on-Trent) (Referring to the report to Stoke-on-Trent City Council on the proceedings of the Panel meeting on 29 October 2018)

Q Looking at the reference made in the report to the budget and medium term financial strategy, the bottom paragraph was interesting in that it showed an estimated funding gap of c£15million, which is interesting in that the PCC's offices for policing are now costing c£15m, West Midlands is only costing about £5m. Different forces have different costs, but West Midlands is a much bigger force with a lot more to do and say than Staffordshire, Staffordshire is one of the smaller forces. If only £10m of that came back to the City, as I understand it that might bring in an extra 500 police officers on the beat, keep Burton Custody Suite open so they aren't chasing across the whole County, it just doesn't seem feasible that that is the right figure. Can you double check for me please, I have been told categorically that it is just shy of £15m for the running of his office, and that when he stood in election in 2012 he said his office would cost less than the then Police Authority, around about then it was costing about £1.5million, I appreciate costs rise and there is more to do, but £15m is one of the most expensive PCC offices across the country for one of the smallest forces. We've gone down from about 2400 police officers in the county to about 1600, it's a massive drop and if we can get more police

officers for that money that would go a long way in helping us with a lot of other issues, including nationally today a massive rise in violent crime has been announced.

A – This question mirrors representations from the Police Federation, copies of which are understood to have been received by Panel members. I have written to Panel members individually responding to the points made, particularly correcting references to the cost of the OPCC as the quoted figure includes funds allocated to the commissioning of services by the OPCC on behalf of the Force. . It is regrettable that all Panel members do not appear to have received my response. This question is politically motivated.

3, From Councillor Robinson (Stoke-on-Trent City Council):

Q - A few months ago we asked about Matthew Ellis attending an Adults and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, is there an update?

A – Willing to attend an Committee meetings on a mutually convenient date.

31. Police, Fire and Crime Panels National Conference, 12 November 2018 - Feedback

The Chairman, Mr Walker (co-optee) and the Support Officer to the Panel reported on discussions held at the Annual Conference for Police (Fire) and Crime Panel held in early November 2018.

The Panel discussed the report that an IT users survey had shown satisfaction with IT provision to be lower in Staffordshire than the national average with queries about the level and nature of investment in IT. The survey raised queries on the extent to which Staffordshire had led on the introduction of technology onto the front line.

Responding the Commissioner referred to the complex nature of the IT transformation programme which, in some areas, had experienced problems which were being addressed. He expressed disappointment at the absence of reference to the popularity of the mobile technology in use (eg Apps) and to reports on the introduction of frontline technology, stressing that Staffordshire had pioneered the cross Force use of bodycams. He agreed to report to Panel on the progress of the IT Transformation Programme.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted and the Commissioner report to a future Panel meeting on the progress of the IT Transformation Programme.

32. Proposed Policing Precept and Budget 2019/20

The Commissioner presented his proposed Police Budget and Precept for 2019/20 indicating a net budget requirement of £196.994million. He referred to the increase in the Home Office Police Grant element to £107.139million (compared to £104.936m for 2018/19). Whilst an increased figure, the Commissioner submitted that this was a cash flat allocation as it included provision to help meet unforeseen additional employer contributions to the Police Pension Scheme which had been the subject of discussion with the Home Office during the Autumn 2018 period.

In addition to the Grant the Home Office had announced that the threshold for a referendum on Police Precept increase was being raised to £24 per household, per annum for 2019/20. For 2018/19 that threshold had been raised to £12 per household per annum and at that time the £12 was also to apply to 2019/20.

The Commissioner's proposed budget was based on a Precept of £24 per household for 2019/20 which would generate an additional £9.299million. Proposals for the use of that funding were - to build a sustainable base budget, maintain and safeguard policing and community services in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and make additional investment in the Police and Crime Plan. Details were submitted of proposals by the Commissioner and Chief Constable to invest £3.588million of the additional funds in new systems, the implementation of the new Policing model and the recruitment of a number of additional officers. The balance of the additional Precept income would be used to address base budget pressures.

The Panel questioned the Commissioner on warranted officers and PCSO numbers and the areas of policing on which the Chief Constable would focus investment. In supporting the 2018/19 Precept increase the Panel had been informed that a total of 69 officers would be recruited over the 2018/20 period. The Commissioner reported on the progress of the recruitment programme acknowledging the Panels views on the importance of evidencing an increase in numbers as had been expected by the public when supporting last years increased Precept. When looking at the total policing establishment and factors affecting police numbers (such as retirements and transfers) the Panel called for clearer information from the Commissioner on Police numbers and it was agreed that a workshop event would be held to examine in detail the policing establishment and it's deployment.

The Precept/budget report was accompanied by a number of financial strategies (see below). With regard to the Reserves Strategy, the Staffordshire Force currently has the lowest level of General Reserves of all Forces in England and Wales at approximately 1% of net revenue budget. The guide for General Reserves was 3% in order to provide the safe level at which any Force would be able to respond to major incidents.. The Commissioner acknowledged the need to raise the level of General Reserves but reiterated his view that they should be kept to a minimum to ensure that public money was being spent on frontline services. Consequently he proposed to increase the General Reserve to 3% at the beginning of each financial year and to maintain a minimum 2% throughout the year.

Other aspects of the proposed Budget/Precept discussed by the Panel included the proposed funding levels for non-statutory services (eg Drug and Alcohol Abuse Support Services) and the proposed cessation of funding for the SPACE scheme and the Commissioner's confidence that sufficient alternative funding would be available for that scheme from other agencies.

Commenting on the national picture, the Commissioner referred to the gradual increase in percentage of overall police funding being directed to nationwide services such as anti-terrorism and reported that the timing of the Comprehensive Spending Review had not yet been announced. Forces were calling for 3 year budget settlements to allow for more forward planning.

RESOLVED – That the veto not be exercised and that the proposed Policing Revenue Budget and Precept 2019/20 be supported; the formal report to the Commissioner highlight the Panel’s request for clearer information on the plans for investment in the Force, including the number of police officers; The Panel to hold a workshop to receive that information from the Commissioner to better able members to carry out a monitoring role during 2019/20.

The Panel’s formal report to the Commissioner setting out its full decision is posted at: <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/yourcouncil/staffordshire-police-and-crime-panel/Response-to-the-Policing-Draft-Budget-and-Precept-201920.aspx>

33. Policing Treasury Management Strategy

The Panel considered the Policing Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20 the main features of which set out how the primary source of funding would continue to be cash but with a forward borrowing strategy and loan restructure strategy in place in accordance with Government guidance on Local Authority Investments.

RESOLVED – That the Policing Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20 be noted.

34. Reserves Strategy

The Panel considered the full Policing Reserves Strategy which in addition to proposing a initial General Reserve level of 3% of net revenue budget for 2019/20 (see minute 32 above), reflected the intention to maintain other Reserves at a minimum level and to use capital receipts to create reserves to invest in Transformation activity.

RESOLVED - That the Policing Reserves Strategy 20-19/20 be noted.

35. Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy

The Panel considered the Policing Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2019/20 the main features of which were to focus expenditure to best support the other strategies of the Force and Commissioner and to adopt a balanced portfolio approach to funding the programme.

RESOLVED – That the Policing Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2019/20 be noted

36. Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire - Update

The Panel received an update report by the Commissioner on the progress of projects and initiatives under each of the five themes of his Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire strategy for policing and community safety in the County.

Issues raised by members included:

- An apparent reduction in funding from the Ministry of Justice – The Commissioner reported that this was a relatively minor reduction but would provide details

- The proposed withdrawal of funding from the SPACE project with concern raised at the potential effect on anti-social behaviour levels. The Commissioner reported confidence that sufficient alternative funding existed to enable the scheme to continue. This was not a core responsibility and funding had to be diverted to frontline services
- The importance of funding preventative/rehabilitation projects. The Commissioner explained that as other authorities/agencies withdrew support from these projects it was becoming increasingly challenging for him to meet any funding shortfall
- A request for an update on the Deputy Commissioners work on issues such as FGM and Domestic Violence. The Commissioner agreed to the Deputy's participation in a Panel Workshop.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted and the new reporting format be extended to include a template for the IT Transformation Programme.

37. Police and Fire and Rescue Services in Staffordshire/Stoke-on-Trent - Joint Governance and Collaboration - Update Report

The Commissioner reported that the transition arrangements for the joint governance of Police and Fire and Rescue Services in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent had received a substantial level of assurance from independent auditors.

Referring to collaborative working, the Commissioner reported that the Collaboration Board was working to identify and implement initiatives which would build on those projects already in place. Their priorities were to bring together the 'enabling services' and to develop greater joint use of the police and fire estate.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

38. Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members

There were no specific questions on this occasion.

39. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

RESOLVED – That the schedule of meetings and proposed Work Programme for 2019/20 be updated to include reference to the agreed Workshop on Policing numbers.

Chairman