

Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel

Report of the Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel

To Staffordshire County Council – 24 May 2018

In accordance with agreed practice I am reporting on matters dealt with at a meeting of the Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel on 23 April 2018 in order to draw your attention to issues of wider interest and/or implications.

Joint Governance of Police and Fire and Rescue Services in Staffordshire

The Home Secretary announced on 26 March 2018 that, after consideration of the Independent (CIPFA) assessment of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Business Case, she had approved the transfer to him of the Governance responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service in Staffordshire. The 'Governance Model' is one of three options provided in legislation for the Commissioners involvement in the running of the Fire and Rescue Service. Under this Model the Commissioner becomes the Fire Authority as a separate legal entity.

Reporting on the implementation of the decision, the Commissioner referred to the Home Office intention to have in place the necessary Statutory Instrument and two Transfer Orders (for Assets, Property and Liabilities and for Staffing) by 1 June 2018.

In preparation for the change a Project Plan has been developed. The Commissioner will be chairing a Transition Board to oversee delivery of that Plan. A number of work streams have been identified with Corporate Governance arrangements being a priority in readiness for 1 June. Other work streams include: Finance, Assets and Liabilities, Contracts and Human Resources.

The Commissioner referred to the joint working taking place between his Office, the Police and representatives of the Fire and Rescue Authority/Service, commenting on the positive approach being adopted by all.

For the Commissioner personally, the priority was to embark on a communication/engagement exercise with those working for the Fire and Rescue Service/Authority, to build on key reassurance messages already issued. The Commissioner's final comments were on collaborative working arrangements with the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer leading on delivery of the opportunities identified in his Business Case and exploration of further opportunities for the future.

For the Panel, the priority is to ensure that amongst its members there is a level of knowledge and experience in the roles and responsibilities of the Fire and Rescue Service. The Local Government Association will be delivering training on 27 June 2018. In addition the Panel's Support Officer is meeting with her counterpart from the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel (the first to have Fire added to their remit) to benefit from their experiences in taking on this new area.

Progress reports will be submitted to future Panel meetings

Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire

The Panel received its quarterly update on the delivery of the Commissioner's Strategy. In presenting the update the Commissioner commented on the significant changes in the type of crime committed in recent years (eg Cyber Crime) which had necessitated the major redesign of policing services with Forensic Services highlighted as one of the most affected areas. There was an increasing need to focus on Early Intervention and to work in partnership with other agencies. The latter was becoming vulnerable to budget cuts.

Particular discussion took place on the effectiveness of the SPACE scheme, sponsored by the OPCC, in reducing Youth Anti Social Behaviour with the Commissioner highlighting other, year round schemes for youth engagement which were enjoying similar success.

Reference was also made to the significant progress being made in delivering the Managing Offenders Action Plan, the majority of which was dependent on, and proved the value of, Partnership working across agencies.

National Association of Police (Fire) and Crime Panels

The Panel agreed to join the newly formed National Association of Police (Fire) and Crime Panels, which was to take the form of a Special Interest Group within the Local Government Association structure. The National Association would provide a means of information sharing, networking and potential joint scrutiny with other Panels.

Confirmation Hearing – Interim Chief Finance Officer

The Panel held a separate meeting (Confirmation Hearing) to consider the Commissioner's wish to appoint Jane Heppel as Interim Chief Finance Officer in the OPCC. The Commissioner explained his wish to make the appointment on an Interim basis given that the Police and Fire and Rescue Services were in a transition stage with ultimate requirements in terms of Financial leadership to be defined.

He commented on the skills, qualities and experience that made Jane Heppel a suitable candidate for the role. In turn, Jane Heppel answered Members' questions on her employment history, professional qualifications and negotiating skills, for example when dealing with colleagues' aspirations for service development when resources were limited.

The Panel supported the Commissioner's proposed appointment of Jane Heppel as Interim Chief Finance Officer in the OPCC. In reaching that decision members held concerns about the number of Confirmation Hearings held for this particular post and authorised the Chairman to write to the Commissioner for an explanation as to why this was the case.

For more information on this meeting or on the Police and Crime Panel in general please contact Julie Plant (01785 276135 e mail Julie.plant@staffordshire.gov.uk) or Helen Phillips (01785 276143 or helen.phillips@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.

David Williams

Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel Chairman

Staffordshire County Council