

Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel

Report of the Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel

To Staffordshire County Council – 26 July 2018

In accordance with agreed practice I am reporting on matters dealt with at a meeting of the Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel on 3 July 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

A main focus for debate by the Panel was the imminent transfer of the governance of the Fire and Rescue Service to the Commissioner. The Order (Statutory Instrument 2018/696) has been laid before Parliament with a 1 August 2018 effective date. An Early Day Motion submitted by four MPs calling for the annulment of the Order was noted by the Panel.

Members had received training by the Local Government Association on the role and responsibilities of the Fire and Rescue Service and Authority. They discussed with the Commissioner their understanding of the operational implications for him of the transfer. The Commissioner emphasised his view that operational *risk* associated with the service would transfer to him rather than operational *responsibility*.

In terms of immediate actions, the Commissioner was focussing on holding briefing meetings with all service employees. Post transfer of governance to him he would be prioritising moves to rationalise support services with the aim of developing one support function for the Police and Fire. He stressed that each service would remain operationally independent. In the longer term the Commissioner was seeking to widen the role of Fire Service personnel however there were national influences which affected local arrangements. He added that the Chief Constable's focus remained on delivering the new operational model aimed at increasing policing visibility. Commenting on the progress of the transfer of the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service the Commissioner commended the positive approach being adopted by all levels of personnel within the service.

For the Panel itself, the implications of the Joint Governance arrangements are that it's remit extends to include the scrutiny of the Fire and Rescue Service/Authority. The Panel will become the Police, Fire and Crime Panel for Staffordshire, mirroring a similar change in title for the Commissioner. There is a requirement to ensure that fire and rescue service 'knowledge and expertise' exists amongst the Panel members. At this time, through training, the members are seeking to develop that expertise amongst themselves. If necessary, the extent of compliance with the requirement will be reviewed. As the additional workload of the Panel cannot yet be quantified members agreed to continue with their existing quarterly meeting arrangements. They did approve revisions to their Terms of Reference and Procedure rules to accommodate their new role.

Progress reports will be submitted to future Panel meetings

Police and Crime Commissioners Annual Report 2017/18

As required, the Commissioner submitted his draft Annual Report 2017/18 for comment by the Panel. In reporting on its content the Commissioner emphasised the ways in which the demands on policing had changed during his period of office due to the changes in scale and complexity of the types of crime committed. By way of example the Commissioner reported that people are 20 times more likely to be a victim of crime online than in person. Additionally, public confidence in reporting crime such as serious sexual offences and domestic abuse had significantly increased, again placing greater demands on police resources.

The Annual Report detailed projects being delivered under each of the five themes adopted by the Commissioner in his Policing Strategy namely: Modern Policing, Early Intervention, Supporting Victims and Witnesses, Managing Offenders and Promoting Public Confidence.

The Panel is required to formally notify the Commissioner of its views on the Report with that notification published online.

Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire

The Panel received its quarterly update on the delivery of the Commissioner's Strategy overall together with a report focussing on the Public Confidence theme.

Member' discussion focussed on the presentation of update information and there wish to receive indications of progress against set aims rather than overall summaries/position statements. It was agreed that a Panel member would meet with the Commissioner's Chief Officer to discuss future report format.

OPCC and Police Force Group Financial Position 2017/18

Members queried a number of apparently wide variations in estimated and actual outturn amounts under major spend headings including those for IT and Transformation Projects. It was reported that changes were due to a revision of accounting techniques in accordance with Codes of Practice. Further budget lines were queried including the cost of the Commissioner's Office. Replying the Commissioner referred to the need to view his office as a Commissioning Organisation responsible for the provision of major service areas.

The Panel referred to their last meeting during which a Confirmation Hearing had bene held for the post of Interim Chief Finance officer and queries had been raised with the Commissioner on the reasons for the seemingly regular change of personnel in this post. Responding the Commissioner acknowledged the Panel's concerns and reported that there had been historical issues to address in terms of the financial management arrangements adopted by the Force who provided the

majority of support to the Chief Finance Officer, adding that action to address those issues was nearing completion giving a more robust service. Most recently he had sought Interim appointments in view of his bid to secure joint governance of Police and Fire and the uncertainty about future requirements as shared support services were developed.

Other Issues Discussed

The Panel considered further reports on a variety of issues including the Use of the Panel's Home Office grant, and the OPCC and the Annual Report on complaints. The following matters which may have a local interest to members were raised during the Panels discussions and questioning of the Commissioner:

Safer Neighbourhood Panels

The Commissioner was questioned on the 'rumour' that OPCC funding for Safer Neighbourhood Panels was to be withdrawn. The Commissioner reported his disappointment at the differing levels of commitment amongst local authorities to the organisation of the Panels as was expected of them. He was reviewing the degree to which the Panels were providing Value for Money and quoted those Panels operating within Stoke-on-Trent as examples which met his expectations.

Removal of Travellers

A member questioned the Commissioner on the perceived delays in police action to remove Travellers from land in their area. The Commissioner referred to the misconception that the removal of Travellers was a Police responsibility. Following his own enquiries into responsibility for dealing with recent issues at various locations in the County, a new advice note was being issued to the Police and to Local Authorities detailing the responsibilities of each. Members acknowledged the Travellers' own familiarity with their legal rights and responsibilities and those of the Agencies. The fast – track system operated by Stoke-on-Trent City Council was cited as a successful approach.

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