

Minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Meeting held on 29 October 2018

Present: Stephen Sweeney (Chairman)

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

Apologies: Simon Gaskin

PART ONE

16. Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED – That Mr Stephen Sweeney be appointed Chairman of this Panel.

17. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

18. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2018

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 3 July 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

19. 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.

In order to provide for more meaningful scrutiny, Panel members requested a review of the extent to which text in published decisions was redacted.

The published decision on the award of a contract for the provision of Domestic Abuse Support Services was discussed (see minute 20 below)

20. Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

Members of the public submitted questions and received the replies detailed (see Appendix to minutes).

The Panel subsequently questioned the Commissioner on the award of the contract particularly on whether the current level of involvement by volunteers in the provision of support services would be maintained and, if not, what action the Commissioner would take in the longer term should any formal contractual arrangements cease.

Responding, the Commissioner was confident that volunteer commitment would continue, commenting that he was holding discussions with local Groups on their involvement in the delivery of new contract.

Addressing questions on the tender and evaluation processes for the contract, the Commissioner considered the process to have been fair, transparent and robust. He submitted that the exercise had secured a single cross county service of a constant standard for all.

The Commissioner clarified the position on provision of Refuges for victims of abuse, explaining that funding was allocated to local councils and that he was working with them to provide co-ordinated support for victims.

21. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

a) Update on Governance and Commissioner Development in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

The Commissioner reported that following the transfer to him of Governance responsibility for the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service from 1 August 2018, key actions to fulfil the statutory requirements in relation to the transfer of staff, assets, and resources had been completed and the Strategic Governance Board for that Service had met and decisions published..

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

b) Collaboration between Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service - Update

The Commissioner reported on a number of functions for which joint working arrangements between the Police and Fire and Rescue Services had been in operation for some time including Supplies and logistics, and emergency transport and engineering. Referring to his own priorities he acknowledged the need to address the shortage of retained Firefighters in Staffordshire. He also reported that discussions were underway with the Chairman of the West Midlands Fire Control Governance Board on future arrangements.. Looking to future proposals the Commissioner reported the establishment of a Joint Governance Board to identify and make recommendations to him on opportunities for collaboration/service improvement.

RESOLVED – That the current level of collaboration be noted.

c) Fire and Rescue Service Corporate Safety Plan 2017 -20 (Incorporating Integrated Risk Management Plan)- Update

The Panel considered a report on the implementation of the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Corporate Safety Plan 2017 – 20 which incorporated the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

The report detailed the required contents of both the IRMP and the Corporate Safety Plan. The documentation had been endorsed and adopted by the Commissioner when taking responsibility for governance of the Fire and Rescue Service and the three priorities of Education and Engagement, Community Safety and Wellbeing and Planning, Resilience and Response had been re-affirmed.

The Commissioner reported on the performance of the Service against a series of key indicators and detailed various projects being undertaken in partnership with other agencies. A summary was given of the involvement of the Staffordshire service in a number of regional and national initiatives including the National Operational Guidance Programme and the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) aimed at improving liaison between the three main blue light services attending major incidents.

The Commissioner reported that he continued to familiarise himself with the work of the Fire and Rescue Service and anticipated drawing up proposals from Spring 2019 to build on the success of the service.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

d) Medium Term Financial Strategy - Fire & Rescue

The financial position at the time of transfer of governance of the Service to the Commissioner was a total budget for 2018/19 of £40.216million, 37% of which was central government funded, the remainder raised by the Precept. The Service was committed to a four year efficiency plan to achieve £4million of savings up to 2019/20. (in return commitment to that 4 year plan had given the service security regarding its central government funding levels over the four years) Up to March 2018 £2.2m had been achieved. the remaining £1.8m of savings had reduced to £1.3million following a higher than assumed Council Tax Precept rate for the current year. Measures were in place to achieve the £1.3million.

The Commissioner reported on Central Government's recent announcement on the need to increase employer contributions to the Firefighters Pension Scheme with effect from 2019/20 following review by the Actuary. National level discussions were currently taking place on the funding of any increase in contributions. Other risks to the budget position were reported, including potential reductions on Government funding and the effect of any change in the way in which the Capital Programme was funded. Savings anticipated as a result of changes to the Service governance arrangements were detailed however none had been incorporated into the current years budget.

A number of assumptions on central and local funding levels and pension costs to the service up to 2021/22 were detailed which gave a predicted budget deficit in 2021/22 of £2.469million.

RESOLVED – That the budget position be noted

22. Staffordshire Police Service

a) Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire 2017-2020

The Commissioner reported on the progress of projects and initiatives under his Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire, focussing on those pursued under the 'Early Intervention' theme.

Members' discussion centred on the SPACE scheme to which the Commissioner had allocated funding during the 2018 summer period. In practice the Commissioner allocates funding to organisations, including local councils, to set up and run youth engagement schemes during the summer school holiday periods, in order to reduce anti-social behaviour.

The Commissioner was questioned on the extent to which the funding provides for new diversionary activities over and above those already provided by organisations such as Youth Clubs. The Commissioner acknowledged that in some instances established activities were being incorporate into the SPACE scheme, suggesting that this reflected a wish to be associated with the strong reputation of SPACE and its achievements. His funding did provide for new, additional projects which otherwise would not exist. The overall reduction on anti-social behaviour was his priority and he expressed appreciation of the work of many partner organisations and volunteers in delivering the SPACE scheme. The Commissioner was asked to consider in relation to SPACE were the complexity of the funding application process and the wish to see the scheme extended to provide all year round activities.

Members remained concerned about the future of Safer Neighbourhood Panels and sought assurances from the Commissioner on their future funding. The Commissioner reiterated his wish to review the Panels due to a wide variation in their effectiveness and degree of public engagement. He continued to look to SNPs as a means of providing local accountability for the Police Service.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

b) Medium Term Financial Strategy - Police Service

The updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period to 2021/22 showed an estimated funding gap of c£15million. This was a revision on the £13million reported to Panel in February 2018 and was mainly due to recent government announcements on an increase in employer contributions to the Police Pension Scheme with effect from 2019/20. The forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review was adding to uncertainty about future Policing budgets.

The Commissioner reported on national discussions on the funding of the additional contributions to the Police Pension Scheme and gave assurances that at the present time he was pursuing the recruitment and appointment of additional warranted officers in line with his proposals when the 2018/19 'enhanced' Precept was approved.

Referring to the national and local picture on Police funding and activity, the Commissioner reported that whilst Government funding remained stable, the percentage allocated to national priorities was increasing, reflecting the changing nature of crime. He briefly summarised national and local police performance levels commenting on the risks to local performance posed by budget reductions. The recently produced Force

Management Statement served to co-ordinate the challenges and expectations on the Force with its financial expectations.

The Commissioner's assumptions on costs and inflation up to 2021/22 were detailed together with the gap analysis for the MTFs for the same period. That gap analysis showed a shortfall of £4.494million in 2019/20 which was dependent on achieving reductions in the Capital Programme and securing other savings. Any savings resulting from collaboration with the Fire and Rescue Service had not yet been incorporated into forecasts.

Referring to the Capital Programme and level of Reserves, the Commissioner proposed a gradual reduction in the Programme to limit the long term borrowing requirement, and to replenish Reserves, explaining his intention to use the latter as a revolving investment fund in line with his belief that maximum funding should be available for frontline services.

The Commissioner requested the opportunity to discuss budget options for 2019/20 with the Panel prior to submitting a proposed Precept to their January 2019 meeting.

RESOLVED – That the Medium Term Financial Strategy update be noted and a consultation event be held on 26 November 2018

23. Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members

Responding to a request for an update on action to address unauthorised travellers' encampments in the County, The Commissioner reported that a Guidance Paper had been issued across policing areas and commented on the general over-expectation of the role and powers of the Police Service to address this issue.

24. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

The Secretary submitted details of proposed meeting dates and work programme for the Panel up to April 2020. Members queried the ability of the proposed arrangements to accommodate the Panel's additional responsibilities in relation to the Fire and Rescue Service.

RESOLVED – That the Chairman consider options for the future management of the Panel's workload.

Appendix to the minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel meeting 29th October 2018, Item No. 6.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC TO THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

1.From J Bould of Hednesford (questioner not present)

I am President of Soroptimist International of Cannock and District, as a service organisation and charity we have been supporting our local Women's Aid and Pathway organisations outreach work and know the vital service they provide to victims of

domestic violence. We understand that there has recently been a new domestic violence service commissioned from one countywide organisation. Could the PCC help us understand the impact this is going to have locally, and what community impact assessment was done in regard to the effect on those local charities and communities who have been serving our communities locally?

Matthew Ellis - “Community Impact assessment was done as part of a very comprehensive commissioning exercise. The impact is broadly going to be around getting rid of the ‘postcode lottery’ that’s been there for some time. I firmly believe that you should be in a place where you don’t have to rely on living in a particular place in order to get a necessary service. We envisioned spending more of the available money on frontline services and the commissioning process showed that more value, more money would go to frontline services. With the way we commissioned it, with one provider, rather than multiple providers. Refuges are mentioned quite a lot, Refuges are not affected, the only thing that is affected is the fact that I’ve subsidised, quite rightly, by the way, the reduction in budgets that the City Council and the County Council have made over recent years, with an extra 1.8 million pounds from my budgets. So, the principle was single service across Staffordshire, as it has turned out, additional investment, and, above all, making sure that there is consistency across the city, and across all of Staffordshire, as far as the service availability is concerned.”

Stephen Sweeney – “The question is ‘could the PCC help us understand the impact this is going to have locally?’ do you think you’ve answered that?”

Matthew Ellis – “I think I’ve said I’m putting 1.8 million pounds more in. I think, no matter where you are in Staffordshire or Stoke-on-Trent, it’s not guesswork as to whether you’re going to get the service. So, things like the support services for people who’ve suffered domestic abuse and need to go to court, this sort of thing, in different parts of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, you would get a different level of service.”

2. From Dr J Lomas of Cannock (questioner not present)

The PCC has recently commissioned a new countywide service, including stoke, and the award has been made to a single, national provider. The provision of refuge support was not part of this award. Yet there is a great deal of publicity at the moment about refuges being at risk nationally. What does the PCC intend to do about refuges and supporting them in Staffordshire given they are there for the most at risk victims?

Matthew Ellis - “Refuges are really important. Local Authorities receive funding from Government for Refuges. So, whilst we have supported refuges, we have supported the organisations that provide them. I don’t get any money for refuges at all, so it’s down to the City Council and the County Council. I do think that some of the local money that I provide through the funds that go to district councils, is spent on refuges, but that is a local decision for those councils to use the money that I provide as they wish.”

Stephen Sweeney – “So the question is, what does the PCC intend to do about Refuges and supporting them in Staffordshire, given they are there for the most at risk victims – have you answered that?”

Matthew Ellis – “I think so, yes.”

3. From G Jones of Lichfield (questioner present)

In October 2017, as part of the then OPCC’s 2nd attempt to Recommission Domestic Abuse Support Services, a market engagement event was held by the OPCC. The event was attended by both local and national organisations, looking to tender for the upcoming service. Attending on behalf of several national organisations were a number of Business Development and Bid-writing personnel whose sole role is to win new business on behalf of their multi-million-pound national charities. Support Staffordshire fulfils a similar support function, by advising and supporting local charities. Why did the OPCC attempt to bar Support Staffordshire from attending this event and thereby disadvantage local bidders, as evidenced in email communications originating from Helen Jarvie, the OPCC’s Commissioning Manager?

Matthew Ellis – My understanding is that, whilst Support Staffordshire are absolutely there to support local organisations, and whether that was done successfully is open to conclusions to be drawn from the result. My understanding is that there should have been a balance between it being a level playing field across the country and for the local organisations, and I understand, and I wasn’t there, but I understand that in a report that you felt that you were unable to play a level playing field and fight the corner of local organisations, and the way that you did that resulted in a number of complaints afterwards from providers attending the meeting. I’m not going to criticise you in the slightest for fighting for local organisations, but the law is very very clear, it is an open, and a free process, it is a very regulated process, and, as it turned out, the local organisations did not put bids together which were effectively meeting the criteria which meant that Victim Support, which is a national organisation, a renowned national organisation, won the contract. Since that time, I’ve worked very closely with ARCH, and we’re in a very good place now, and I have agreed strategic alignment going forward with ARCH, and I’ve also agreed that I want to support both Pathway and Women’s Aid going forwards – but this was a very, very legal process, it was carried out I believe to the letter. You will know there has been a legal challenge that has been withdrawn because we carried it out to the letter, and, whilst I’m disappointed that local organisations did not secure the contract, we had to go with the best value, the most robust service, and the organisations that could provide the best frontline services for people in Staffordshire”

Stephen Sweeney – “A supplementary question you would like to ask?”

G Jones – “I don’t believe my original question was answered, as the Commissioner’s answer commenced at a point at which I attended the meeting in question. My question was why was there an attempt to bar me from attending the meeting in the first place.”

Matthew Ellis – “I’m not aware that there was any attempt to bar you from the meeting, but I will certainly have a look at that afterwards if that’s what you’re suggesting happened. I’ve had a pretty clear picture about the issues that were raised – I absolutely get that you quite rightly want to support local organisations, but domestic abuse is a massive, massive subject, we have to go with the organisations that can prove beyond doubt that they are the ones who can provide the best service, in the most cost effective way – I think that’s what’s being done. I am more than happy, I mean this is the first time that you’ve raised this with me, as far as being barred – I don’t think anybody’s been barred, I think the issues that were raised were that you were perhaps somewhat overzealous in wanting to promote local organisations, which I applaud on the one hand, but this is a, very highly, regulated process and we have to make sure that we stay legal, that we do it in a way which cannot be challenged, I think that we’ve proven that by the fact that an initial challenge was made that was very swiftly withdrawn afterward, and all three of the organisations involved with that, we are now working productively with to move forwards, and the same applies to Support Staffordshire, as long as you play by the rules.”

4. Second question from G Jones of Lichfield (questioner present)

Following the recent award of the Domestic Abuse Support Service to Victim Support by the Staffordshire Commissioners Office, Support Staffordshire submitted a Freedom of Information request pertaining to the assessment process. Support Staffordshire asked to see the assessment scoring and for details of the moderation process that led to the selection of Victim Support. We have not asked to see the content of any of the bids, only the scoring. Nevertheless, our request has been refused on the grounds that the scoring is commercially sensitive information. As this is clearly inaccurate, will the Commissioner instruct his office to release all the information requested with immediate effect, in order to preserve the transparency of the process and avoid any perception that his office has something to hide? If not, can he explain why not?

M Ellis – “This entire process has been complex, it has been done to the letter, the information that you are requesting, again, is partly confidential, and I think my officials have been in touch with you to explain why it can’t be provided, and it would also cost thousands of pounds to get it all together, so I would suggest that, if you disagree with the decision, and bearing in mind that the others affected are not in the same place as Support Staffordshire as far as this issue is concerned, I would suggest that you deal with the Information Commissioner directly, and we’ll take it from there.”

5. From C Holdcroft (questioner not present)

As a member of the local community, I have invested time and donations into our local domestic violence charities over the last 24 years, by helping to equip and furnish the refuges, by supply goods to people when they are re-housed and supporting the charity wherever possible. With a new national organisation now delivering this service, can you ensure that our local investment continues to be protected?

M Ellis – “For three years now we have been concerned about the difference, the ‘postcode lottery’ to be quite frank, that is available in domestic abuse services across Staffordshire. I’ve put in an additional £8.1 million over three years. I believe that the way in which Commissioners and police services have followed very closely our efforts to, across the country, get people to come forward rather than suffering in silence, which has clearly been happening for many years. I think the services have to be there to meet those people that come forwards, and so when we first started to look at joining up with the city council, and also the county council, the express reason was to make sure that first of all we could potentially reduce administration costs, and, secondly, we could ensure that there wasn’t a ‘postcode lottery’ depending on where you happened to be in Staffordshire. The principle of this is being achieved – I would argue, as you would expect me to, I am very confident that we can talk about this in another 12 months’ time and I think you will find that the service is more consistent, that its available faster, some of the services are now 24 hours, which is a first for Staffordshire, and, in short, I think the redesign of the service, that wasn’t based on imaginary red lines that go across the road depending on what local authority area you’re in was exactly the right thing to do. The extra investment to make up for disinvestment elsewhere I felt was necessary as well and it’s been very difficult to do, but we’ve done it, and I think that when we go and we look back at the services in twelve months’ time we will find it was the right thing to do. At the end of the day it is a significant, serious player in the market who is delivering the service, mainly in Staffordshire, called Victim Support, and, if you remember, Victim Support were the organisation we didn’t give the tender to as far as victim services is concerned, which, at the time, was exactly the right thing to do, and they themselves admit that they learnt a lot from losing that contract and have changed the way they do things. So I’m extremely confident the service we’ve got is one of the most joined up, the most effective, and one of the least ‘postcode lottery’-orientated ones in the entire country, and actually, at a time when most organisations are reducing funding to domestic abuse, in Staffordshire its being maintained, and slightly increased, albeit mainly from my budget.”

6. From J Prince of Cannock (questioner not present)

Following the recent changes in the provision of support for those who suffer from Domestic Abuse in Staffordshire, Could the PCC explain how he will ensure that the new domestic violence service meets the National Statement of Expectations on Violence Against Women from the home office?

M Ellis – “I can absolutely give that assurance.”

7. From D James MBE of Stafford (questioner not present)

The OPCC has recently commissioned a new countywide, single domestic abuse service in partnership with Staffordshire County Council and Stoke City Council, and the award has been made to a single, national provider. The provision of specialist support within refuge accommodation was not part of this award. Yet there is a great deal of publicity at the moment about refuges being at risk nationally, and some concern and debate at a government level. What does the OPCC and its commissioning partners

intend to do to support the continuation of refuge provision in Staffordshire given they are there for the most vulnerable and at-risk victims?

M Ellis – “I say again, I don’t receive money for Refuges, it is the city council and the county council that receive money for that. Some of the locality deal that I provide to every district and borough authority is spent on Refuges – that will continue, it is a local decision by those councils to do that. But as part of the overall picture of what support for domestic abuse looks like, whilst it’s not in my hands, it’s in the city council and the county council’s hand, I know there’s been some reductions, particularly in the county council provisions for that, I will do everything I can to make sure that those two authorities do as much as they can to support people who are in need of refuge.”

8. From D James MBE of Stafford (questioner not present)

‘The OPCC has recently commissioned a new countywide, single domestic abuse service in partnership with Staffordshire County Council and Stoke City Council, and the award has been made to a single, national provider. The provision of specialist support within refuge accommodation was not part of this award. Yet there is a great deal of publicity at the moment about refuges being at risk nationally, and some concern and debate at a government level. What does the OPCC and its commissioning partners intend to do about refuges and supporting them in Staffordshire given they are there for the most at risk victims?’

Answer given as above.

Chairman

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.