

**Minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Meeting held on 10
February 2020**

Present: Stephen Sweeney (Chairman)

Shelia Cartwright (Substitute)	Brian Edwards
Randolph Conteh	Tony Holmes
Paul Darby	Keith Walker
Ann Edgeller	

Apologies: Carl Bennett, Susan Finney, Simon Gaskin and Ashley Yeates

PART ONE

36. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

37. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Panel meeting held on 28 October 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

38. Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) since the last Panel meeting

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

Termination of Contract with Boeing Defence UK for the provision of IT services to Staffordshire Police and the Staffordshire Commissioner (Decision no. 2019/20-006) –

Members sought more information on the decision to terminate the IT Transformation Contract entered into with Boeing in 2016 originally for a ten year period at an estimated cost of £110m. Boeing had been appointed to modernise, develop and deliver IT services to Staffordshire Police. The Commissioner reported that over time the Force requirements and aspirations had changed. This had coincided with Boeing reviewing their Business model therefore both parties had mutually agreed to terminate the contract. He gave assurances that the termination agreement was not detrimental to the Force and agreed to provide information on the spend and services received during the operation of the contract. He further reported that Boeing would be honouring their commitment to the Niche Project which is due to go live in April 2020 (bringing together 12 core IT database systems). Following cessation of the contract IT transformation would be managed in house by the Force.

RESOLVED – That the decision be noted and members be provided with details of spend and services delivered during the operation of the Contract.

39. Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

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

40. National Conference for Police, Fire and Crime Panels/National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels AGM- Feedback Report

The Panel received a report from its member and officer representatives at the AGM of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels and the National Conference for Panels, both held on 19 November 2019.

The National Association had agreed amendments to its Constitution to enable it to be a subscription free organisation due to difficulties experienced by some Panels in securing funding for that fee. The Association would facilitate networking and information sharing with training opportunities offered whenever possible.

Workshops attended as part of the National Conference had included discussions on 'Effective Scrutiny' with reference to the importance of a clear understanding of the relationship between, and role of, each of the parties involved in Panels. It was also noted that the majority of Panels had Force representation at their meetings.

Other Workshop themes included 'Reducing the arrests of women' which had received information on a three year project to stem the flow of women entering the Criminal Justice System and recognising the different approach needed for the management of women in the system.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

41. Proposed Police Budget and Precept 2020/21

a) Proposed Policing Precept and Budget 2020/21

The Commissioner reported that the Home Office Grant Settlement for Staffordshire had been set at £131.479million, an increase of £10.5million on the previous year. The total policing requirement was £212.402 million with the Commissioner proposing to part fund the balance from an increase in Precept of 3.94% (£8.53 pa per Band D property). The Commissioner acknowledged that this figure was marginally below the permitted Referendum limit of £10 but felt that it struck a balance between what could reasonably be asked of Council tax payers and the investment required in local policing.

The Home Office Settlement was noted to include £2.532million ring fenced for the recruitment of 90 additional officers by 31 March 2021. This was Staffordshire's target number for the first phase of the 20,000 additional officers promised in the Governments manifesto. Receipt of the ringfenced funding was dependent on the 90 officers being recruited however the sum available would not fully fund that number of posts. More details on the funding and conditions attached were awaited therefore the Commissioner was unable to answer queries raised by panel members as to whether it might be awarded on a pro rata basis should it not prove possible to recruit 90 officers in one year. The Commissioner was confident that the target could be met with a recruitment programme being developed and made reference to his belief that future

years' increases in manpower might not automatically be entirely made up warranted officers. He predicted recognition of the need for specific expertise to address the changing nature of crime (eg Cyber crime)

The Commissioner referred to the latest published Crime figures which showed Staffordshire to be one of four Forces recording a reduction in crime levels, and reported on his continued commitment to ensuring that budgets were allocated to areas where maximum benefit would be realised. To this end, for the remainder of the increased funding his proposals included: investment in the Special Constabulary to enhance their role in the community, investment in ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) to support the further growth of the Team and its capability in terms of tracking offenders throughout the County and beyond, further expenditure on technology and digital capability in order to maximise their benefits (eg. purchasing the most up to date mobile devices), and investment in IT software to assist with demand management and prioritising the deployment of resources.

The Panel noted that the Settlement was for one year only in view of Government's Capital Spending Review and acknowledged the increased level of risk built into the 2020/21 Budgets due to uncertainty around future funding.

The Commissioner submitted an updated MTFS for the period 2020/21 – 2023/24 which showed the funding gap for 2019/20 had been resolved due to a combination of unpredicted increases in funding streams. Future predicted funding gaps were partly attributed to the fact that the capital spending review was for one year only. Further analysis would be required however the prediction was a deficit of £3.328m by 2024.

Members questioned the assumptions on which the MTFS was based, particularly on police pay, non-pay costs and the Council tax base. The Commissioner reported confidence in the latter two but acknowledged concern expressed at the 2.5% assumed increase in police pay, particularly as the full details were not yet available on the full funding of the additional officers required by central government.

Whilst welcoming the ongoing investment in technology, members sought clarification of the allocation to front line systems (eg the 101 service). Responding the Commissioner reported that investment would provide alternative on-line reporting options.

The Panel further queried the effect on the MTFS of collaborative working. The Commissioner reported that whilst the 2020/21 budget proposals did not include specifics, the shared use of facilities would reduce Police costs.

RESOLVED – That the proposed budget and Precept increase of 3.94% (£8.53 per annum, per household (Band D)) be supported and the Commissioner be notified accordingly.

b) Policing Treasury Management Strategy

The Policing Precept was supported by the Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 which set out proposals for the management of the Commissioner's cash flows, borrowing and investments for the Police Service, and their associated risks. The

Strategy adhered to both CIPFA Guidance and the requirements of the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The key point of the 2020/21 Strategy was the intention to reduce the level of borrowing by funding a number of developments from cash reserves.

RESOLVED – That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 be noted.

c) Reserves Strategy

The Commissioner reported that in line with his statutory obligation to have regard to the level of Reserves needed to meet estimated future expenditure he had provided a gradual increase in the level of Reserves and that for 2020/21 the General Reserve would be maintained at £5.9m. Earmarked Reserves would fluctuate during the next 5 year period due to a number of large replacement programmes (eg Niche and Vehicle Replacements), and was forecast to be around £2.9m by 2024.

RESOLVED – That the Reserves Strategy and the levels proposed up to 2023/24 be noted.

d) Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy

The Commissioner presented his Capital Strategy to 2023/24 setting out investment proposals for the period and the amount of Capital funding required. The Programme showed a reducing borrowing requirement of the period with the total funding requirement falling from £16.367million in 2020/21 to £5.250million in 2023/24.

RESOLVED – That the Capital Strategy and Programme up to 2023/24 be noted.

42. Draft Annual Report of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner 2019/20

As this was the Commissioner's last meeting with the Panel/last Annual Report before retiring from Office, the draft report, on which the Panel is required to formally comment, provided a summary of the progress made throughout his period in office on initiatives under each of the 5 themes of his Strategy.

The Commissioner highlighted a number of projects which he considered to have made a major impact on policing, the public's confidence in policing, and support to the community. These included the implementation of mobile technology across the Force, raising awareness of domestic abuse and improved support for its victims, changes to the way in which individuals with mental health issues were dealt with/assisted by the Police, the Cadets Scheme, including the Junior Cadets initiative, and the revival of the SPACE scheme and its proven effect on reducing Anti-Social Behaviour during the periods when it is in operation. He referred to the significant role played by his Deputy in the instigation and delivery of some of the schemes and voiced particular satisfaction at the changes he'd overseen in the way in which the Force dealt with persons with mental health issues.

The report referred to the intervention and prevention work undertaken to tackle serious violence, highlighting national recognition that health and social issues were contributory

factors. Panel members called for a clearer indication of how the Commissioner's work fulfilled the Home Office strategy for Combatting Serious Violence, the delivery of which was the responsibility of Commissioners.

The Commissioner concluded by suggesting that focus in the future needed to turn to reform of the Prison Service and development of schemes for the reintegration of prisoners into the community.

RESOLVED – That the draft report be noted and the Chairman be authorised to approve its final version, the Commissioner to be requested to include reference in that version to the delivery of the Home Office strategy on Combatting Serious Violence.

43. Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority - Proposed Budget and Precept 2020/21

a) Proposed Fire Revenue Budget 2020/21 (incl MTFs and Precept)

The Service was reported to need a total net revenue budget of £42.404m for 2020/2021, of which £14.618m was Settlement funding made up of Revenue Support Grant, 1% allocation of local business rates and a top up of Business rates by Government. Of note was the resulting £314,000 increase in central Government funding, the first increase since 2012/13. The balance (£27.785m) was to be met from the Precept hence the Commissioner intended to apply the full 1.99% permitted increase (ie £1.51pa for a Band D property).

The Commissioner explained his wish to provide an element of flexibility into the Fire and Rescue Budget to help accommodate a number of uncertainties such as the final pay award to firefighters compared to the 2.5% assumption built into the budget, and the outcome of ongoing legal challenges around Firefighters' pensions. Responding to questions on the progress of pay award negotiations, the Commissioner referred to the uncertain budget position that their lengthy nature had created. The General Reserves were being maintained at a relatively high level in view of that uncertainty.

The budget included a £0.3m deficit in the current financial year. The Commissioner gave assurances that a number of effectiveness and efficiency workstreams were in place to achieve the necessary savings.

The MTFs for the period to 2024/25 predicted a widening budget gap to £1.5m by 2024/25 reflecting the anticipated outcome of the next Comprehensive Spending Review and the effect which the Fair Funding Review might have on Staffordshire's funding position. The Panel acknowledged the uncertainty created by Central Government only committing to one years' funding pending those Reviews but noted the continuation of Pension Grants into 2020/21 which provided 90% of the additional costs of Firefighter Pension Costs resulting from the 2016 Valuation of their Scheme.

The assumptions on which the MTFs was based were queried particularly the non-pay costs increases of up to 5%. It was explained that for the Fire and Rescue Service cost estimates could be more specific than was possible for other areas of the Commissioners responsibilities.

Responding to questions on the financial effect of collaborative working, the Commissioner reported that, whilst any potential savings had not been built into the 2020/21 budget, savings realised from the Shared Services initiatives had funded 3 additional 'preventative' posts in the Fire and Rescue Service. In addition, the shared use of facilities would generate income for the Fire and Rescue Service.

RESOLVED – That the proposed 2020/21 budget and Precept for the Fire and Rescue Service be supported and the Commissioner be notified accordingly.

b) Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2020/21 -2022/23 (incl Minimum Revenue Provision Policy)

The proposed Precept for the Fire and Rescue Service was supported by the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for the period to 2022/23. The Strategy formed part of the overall planning framework for the Service ensuring that the necessary physical resources were available to achieve service aspirations.

The funding streams for the Capital Programme were outlined together with details of proposed areas of expenditure.

RESOLVED – That the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme to 2022/23 be noted.

c) Fire Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21

Details were submitted of the Fire and Rescue Authority's Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 which set out the way in which the Authority intended to manage its cash flows, borrowing and investments and their associated risks.

The strategy was unchanged from the current financial year. It aimed to ensure the use of cash rather than borrowing as far as possible whilst retaining the option to borrow up to £3million if necessary. It was confirmed that the Strategy complied with CIPFA and Central Government guidance.

RESOLVED – That the Treasury Management Strategy, including the intended borrowing limit, for the period to 2022/23 be noted.

44. HMICFRS Review of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service 2018/19

Following a new Inspection Regime, Her Majesty's Inspectorate had carried out its first inspection of the SFRS with the brief - 'to assess how effectively and efficiently the Service prevents, protects the public against and responds to fires and other emergencies, and assesses how well it looks after the people who work for the Service'.

The Commissioner reported that the Inspection had judged the SFRS to be 'Good' in all 3 core questions (Effectiveness, Efficiency and People), 'Good' in 10 of the 11 elements of those 3 core questions, and 'Outstanding' at the 11th element – promoting the right values and culture.

The Commissioner's report included an analysis of each of the elements rated giving a summary of the measures and processes in place or being developed which had

achieved the ratings. Whilst welcoming the favourable outcomes of the inspection the Commissioner stressed that he and the Chief Fire Officer would work to maintain those standards, seek improvements where needed and explore options for developing the service, maximising any benefits which collaborative working with the Police and other agencies might provide.

Members congratulated the Service on its achievements and commented on the strong foundations and leadership which had led to that success.

RESOLVED – That the outcome of the HMICFRS Inspection be noted.

45. SFRS Corporate Safety Plan 2017-20 -Update Report

The Commissioner submitted a progress report on the delivery of the Corporate Safety Plan, illustrating how projects and initiatives being pursued by the Service were fulfilling the principles on which the Plan was based and the three priorities for the Service namely, Education and Engagement, Community Safety and Wellbeing and Planning, Resilience and Response.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

46. Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members

Members of the Panel questioned/sought the views of the Commissioner on the following issues and received the responses indicated:

Question/Issue	Response
Are Community Groups using Fire Station Community Facilities required to have Indemnity Insurance?	A response will be provided
Can the Commissioner evidence the spend/effectiveness of the 25% of the Locality Fund being reserved for allocation by his central office rather than issued to Local Authorities?	Information will be provided for circulation to Panel members.

47. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

The Secretary submitted proposed Panel meeting dates for the period to February 2021 explaining that the Work Programme for those meetings would need to be developed following the election of a new Commissioner in May 2020.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman thanked the Commissioner for his regular attendance and contributions at Panel meetings and wished him well in future ventures.

RESOLVED – That the dates future meetings be noted; the Work Programme to be developed in due course.

Chairman