

Minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Meeting held on 13 July 2020

Present: Stephen Sweeney (Chairman)

Stephen Doyle
Ann Edgeller
Brian Edwards
Tony Holmes

Helena Maxfield
Keith Walker
Ashley Yeates

Also in attendance: Matthew Ellis, Glynn Dixon, David Greensmith

Apologies: Lesley Adams, Paul Darby, Simon Gaskin and Susan Finney (ETAP Observer)

PART ONE

48. Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED – That Mr Stephen Sweeney be appointed Chairman of the Panel for the ensuing year.

The Chairman referred to the recent appointment to the Panel of:

Cllr Lesley Adams – Stoke on Trent City Council
Cllr Alan Pearson – Cannock Chase District Council

49. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED – That Mr Paul Darby be appointed Vice-Chairman of this Panel for the ensuing year.

50. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

51. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Panel meeting held on 10 February 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

52. Temporary Amendments to Panel's Procedural Rules due to COVID 19 Epidemic

The Panel received details of temporary changes to their procedural Rules reflecting the provisions for meetings and access to information during the Covid-19 emergency, as provided for under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. These Coronavirus Regulations came into effect from 4 April

2020 – 6 May 2021 and provided for virtual meetings, addressing issues around members' attendance, voting and public and press access to meetings and documentation.

RESOLVED - That the temporary amendments to the Panels' Procedural Rules be approved.

53. Independent Co-Opted Member - Extension of Term of Office

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 required that the Panel appoint two independent co-opted members. Under the Panels' Procedural Rules co-optees serve a four year period of office, renewable for a further four years. Mr Paul Darby, Panel Co-optee, will have completed his second term of office in September 2020. Due to Covid-19 the recruitment process, which would have begun in April, has been unable to take place. Consequently, the Panel agreed measures to allow Mr Darby to serve for an additional nine month period expiring in June 2021.

RESOLVED – That the temporary relaxation of the Procedural Rule restricting Co-optees' Term of Office to two Terms be approved to enable the re-appointment of Mr Darby for a further nine months from 16 September 2020.

54. Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

There were none at this meeting.

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

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

- *Movement of Staffordshire Police Northern Response Hub to Hanley Fire Station (Decision no. SCP(Fire)202021/001)*

Members asked for clarification over the financial benefits set out for this decision, with an explanation that the £1.8m saving was anticipated capital cost required for refurbishing Hanley Police Station. Discussion centred around the PFI lease and rental of Hanley Fire Station, the cost of improvements to enable the relocation and comparative costs of refurbishing Hanley Police Station.

Fire and Rescue Service Transformation Funding Grant monies would be used to make the necessary refurbishments at the Fire Station to accommodate the Police. This Fire Service funding was available for collaborative blue light projects, with the Home Office having been consulted in its use for this project.

- *Vehicle allowance for Staffordshire Police Executive Team (Decision no. SCP(Police) 202021/001)*

Members queried the saving suggested within the decision notice by the change to a car allowance of £7000.00 per annum when added to the essential user

allowance and mileage claims. This decision was in line with a national initiative and affected only a very small number of senior personnel.

RESOLVED – That the decisions be noted.

56. Home Office Grant 2019/20 and Allocation for 2020/21

The Home Office allocates a grant to the Local Authority that acts as the Host Authority for its area Police, Fire and Crime Panel to meet the costs of administrative support and management services to the Panel. Included in the Grant is an amount of up to £920.00 per annum for each panel member to meet expenses and costs uncured in carrying out their role. Following the transfer of governance responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service to the Staffordshire Commissioner in August 2018, the Home Office approved a short term 20% uplift to the Grant to recognise the additional costs associated with the Panel's wider role and responsibilities. (Notice had been received of a Grant allocation for 2020/21 of £64,340 which was a return to the original Grant level.)

As the Host Authority for the Staffordshire Panel, Staffordshire County Council was required to formally accept the grant offer for 2019/20 and was responsible for its use. The terms of the Home Office Grant Agreement stated that the Police, Fire and Crime Panel would "publish" as a minimum on their website details of all expenditure, including Panel administration costs and individual members' expenses and allowances. Panel Members received details of the expenditure to be published.

RESOLVED – That the report on the Panel expenditure of the Home Office Grant and the 2020/21 allocation be noted.

57. Annual Report on the Handling of Complaints against the Commissioner 2019/20

Under the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2021 the Panel had statutory responsibility for handling and recording complaints, purported complaints and conduct matters about the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire and his Deputy. An analysis of complaints received over the last 12 months showed there had been four complaints from three individuals and Members received details of any actions taken resulting from these, noting that none had been entered into the formal complaints process.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

58. COVID 19

a) Safer, Fairer, United Communities Strategy Update- Effect of COVID 19

In May 2017 the Staffordshire Commissioner for Police, Fire and Rescue, and Crime (Staffordshire Commissioner) published an updated Safer, Fairer, United Communities strategy for 2017-2020. As a result of Covid-19 the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner elections were postponed to May 2021. Consequently, the Staffordshire Commissioner had updated his strategy for this interim period, determining that priorities set out in the Strategy should remain broadly the same for his extended term of office,

but with a refocus on resources to take account of the emergency situation created by the pandemic. A plan, "Covid-19 Response 2020/21", had been issued to:

- ensure that there was sufficient workforce to respond to the crisis and that their safety and wellbeing needs were met;
- hold both services to account for service delivery in a changing environment, including a sufficient, proportional and ethical response;
- facilitate effective partnership working, enabling a joined-up approach in ensuring community safety, protecting vulnerable people and delivering criminal justice;
- ensuring commissioned services continued to deliver support for people throughout the crisis and, where necessary, commissioned services to address newly identified needs; and,
- play an active role in ensuring the local, regional and national response to the crisis met the needs of the people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Referring to the postponement of the Commissioner Elections until May 2021 the Chairman specifically thanked the Commissioner for agreeing to defer his personal plans for the future in order to continue in office for a further 12 months period.

Panel Members asked whether there had been an increase in Domestic Abuse (DA) reported during the crisis. The picture across the country had shown a significant rise in 2 Force areas but in most areas there had been no significant rise or, as in Staffordshire, a fall. A piece of work was currently being undertaken to try and determine the reasons for this, with the findings helping to inform future practice.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

b) Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service - COVID 19 Update

The Panel received details of the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) response to the Covid-19 crisis. The pandemic had impacted on all areas of society and SFRS had adapted quickly to new ways of working and Service delivery. Following a multi-agency assessment meeting (SAM) instigated by the Civil Contingencies Unit on 4 March 2020, and chaired by Public Health England, the Service had instigated its Incident Preplanning and Logistics Framework. This Framework set up a tactical planning cell that supported the Services response to the pandemic.

SFRS has been involved in delivering a wide range of services and in adapting existing services to address the restrictions resulting from the pandemic. These included:

- delivering food parcels to the most vulnerable;
- storing and delivering Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to frontline Healthcare professionals;
- supporting the national effort by conducting 618 vulnerable persons visits to those most at risk, taking the opportunity to provide home safety information during these visits;
- providing an on-line safe and sound schools education programme for delivery in schools.

RESOLVED – That SFRS's response to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis be noted.

c) Staffordshire Police - COVID 19 Update

The Staffordshire Police Force response to Covid-19 formally commenced through the establishment of Operation Jafar on 18 March 2020 and the Panel received details of the mechanisms for national, regional and local connectivity and co-ordination that were established to address issues resulting from the pandemic.

Their engage, explain and encourage approach to policing the crisis had worked well and Members congratulated the Commissioner on this. The number of fines and formal action taken in Staffordshire had been significantly fewer than in most other force areas.

RESOLVED – That the update response by Staffordshire Police to the Covid-19 crisis be noted.

Panel Members requested that a letter of congratulations be sent to Staffordshire Police and to Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service thanking them for their service during the Covid-19 crisis.

59. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Corporate Safety Plan 2017 - 2020 Update on Delivery

Publication of the SFRS Corporate Safety Plan (CSP) Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) fulfilled the legislative obligations as defined within the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018.

Members queried the number of automatic fire alarm signals classed as unwanted fire signals during Quarter 4 in 2019/20 in comparison to the Quarter 4 figures for 2018/19. The figures were checked after the meeting and clarified as 321 in 2019/20 in comparison with 296 in 2018/19.

RESOLVED – That the update on the delivery of the CSP 2017-2020 be noted.

60. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Corporate Safety Plan 2020/23 - Update on consultation/preparation

The Panel received details of the consultation process undertaken on the new SFRS Corporate Safety Plan 2020/24. Copy of the new draft plan had been shared with Panel Members shortly before this meeting and they were asked to forward any comments to the Secretary.

RESOLVED – That the preparation of the Safety Plan 2020-2024 be noted and any comments on the Draft Plan be forwarded to the Secretary after the meeting.

61. Boeing Defence UK Contract Update

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner had entered into a strategic partnership based contract with Boeing Defence UK (BDUK) on 1 April 2016 for the provision of IT services. The contract had an estimated value of £110m over 10 years, inclusive of revenue and capital funding. The Commissioner made a decision on 18 December 2019 to mutually terminate the contract with BDUK from 30 June 2020. This decision was taken in light of BDUK's strategic and corporate decision to no longer have an interest in

UK policing and the Commissioner’s review of the changing IT needs of the Force, following significant advances in this area. The delivery of the Niche record management system prior to 30 June 2020 also meant that Staffordshire Police had completed their most significant investment ever.

IT services would be brought back in-house and Members asked whether staff would be Tuped over, seeking clarification on whether the original in-house IT staff structure had all been Tuped when the contract was given to BDUK in 2016. Most staff had made the move to BDUK, with the transfer allowing BDUK to make alterations to the staffing structure within the first two years. They had done this at the end of the second year.

Staffordshire Police had produced an IT staffing structure that was fit for purpose going forward, with staff being Tuped back in-house and a recruitment process undertaken to fill any vacancies.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

62. HMICFRS Report on the PEEL Inspection of the Staffordshire Police Force 2018/19

The Panel noted the results of the HMICFRS PEEL inspection of Staffordshire Police in 2018/19. Overall the inspection had rated Staffordshire Police as “Good”. The Panel congratulated the Commissioner on this excellent report which, alongside the Fire and Rescue Service report, showed that these two Services were working well for the people of Staffordshire.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

63. 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
Concerns over an increase in anti-social behaviour and drug taking in parks around the Stafford area, specifically in Wildwood and Charnley, and the need for an increased Police presence to address this.	As a result of the crisis restrictions there had been an increase in reported anti-social behaviour which the Police were aware of. Work was already underway to try and address this. The Commissioner agreed to raise these continued concerns again.
Whilst the roads had been quieter during the pandemic restrictions, an increase in speeding had also been seen. Concerns were raised over the lack of speed cameras in use during this period and assurances looked for that these would return.	There had been a period at the height of the crisis when an operational decision was taken to focus resources in different areas. Speed cameras were now back in use and had seen a significant increase in numbers caught

	speeding.
Two Deputy Chief Constables had recently been recruited to Staffordshire and Members asked why these had been from out of county.	These posts were open to competition and were appointed based on merit.
Continued difficulties with the 101 service, specifically the time taken for calls to be answered.	There was a move towards a more digital service for non-urgent calls rather than the telephone 101 service.
Have the number of police officers increased.	Yes, 60 extra officers have already been recruited. More officers will be recruited as part of Staffordshire's share of the Governments promised increase in officer numbers.
Members were glad that the SPACE project was expected to continue this year and asked for clarification of how this would work in practice.	It was hoped that the SPACE programme would go ahead, although the finer details had yet to be signed off.
Concern was raised over the continual change of Chief Inspectors, with examples shared where Chief Inspectors stay for only 6 months in one area, resulting in continuity issues.	The Commissioner agreed to take this back.
Members noted an article from the Sentinel Newspaper which suggested that due to sickness at the peak of the crisis, fewer officers were tackling a greater number of crimes.	A great deal of very impressive work had been undertaken on the most serious crimes during the crisis period.

64. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

Members noted that dates for panel meetings were scheduled up until February 2021, after which time purdah would need to be considered in the run up to the PFCC elections in May.

RESOLVED – That the scheduled dates be noted.

Chairman