

## **Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel**

Report of the Chairman of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel

To Staffordshire County Council

In accordance with agreed practice I am reporting on matters dealt with by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at its meeting on Monday 26 October 2020.

The main items considered were:

### **Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)**

Details were submitted of 4 decisions published by the Commissioner since the last Panel meeting:

- **Tamworth Belgrave Shared Estate**  
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCPF-D-202021-002.pdf>
- **Crest Support to LCJB Performance Framework Product**  
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCP-D-202021-002-4.pdf>
- **Space 2020**  
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCP-D-202021-003>.
- **Purchase of X2 Taser Devices**  
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCP-D-202021-004>.

### **COVID 19 (Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service) - Update**

The Panel received an update on the activity undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Service since the last meeting in July 2020. The Service had continued to be fully involved in all aspects of the multi-agency commitment and had participated in both the strategic coordination group and the recovery coordination group in order to influence and support the ongoing Local Resilience Forum approach. The Service had continued to perform well despite a 2.5% reduction in staff with Covid related absence. Some proactive work had been curtailed but most of the non face to face prevention work had continued.

### **Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Fire and Rescue Service- Update**

The Panel received an update on the current Medium-Term Financial Strategy which included information on the following:

- Update to current year's budget
- Update to future years' MTFS assumptions
- The impact of COVID-19 on financial performance and position
- Sensitivity analysis around key financial items
- Update on capital programme

The Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on the in-year savings as well as the ongoing potential impact on future Fire funding. The Fire and Rescue service has adapted

quickly to new ways of working and Service delivery. The work had been complex and cut across numerous partner organisations and government departments locally, regionally, and nationally.

£1 million in grant funding had been received from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in order for the Service to deal with the additional costs incurred as a result of the pandemic. To date the Service was forecasting to spend around £0.5m of the £1.0m grant by the end of October 2020. This did not take into account potentially the impact of a second wave and further lock down restrictions during the winter. This money had been made available through a Section 31 Grant, and any balance remaining at the end of the year would be earmarked to support the reduction in Council Tax receipts.

The Coronavirus pandemic is affecting funding across the wider public sector and it was unclear if further support would be provided by the Government as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22. Without further support the Staffordshire Commissioner would need to consider how the financial position can be supported through; Council Tax increases, the delivery of further savings, and also the intelligent use of reserves.

The report included a table that gave the best and worst case scenario which would be developed further as more information was made available by the billing authorities. It was estimated that there would be a 4.5% deficit, £1.2m for the Fire and Rescue service.

### **Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan 2020 /24 - Update**

The Panel was updated on the progress to date on the four priorities that the Service is delivering against which were: -

- a) Prevention and Early Intervention
- b) Protecting Staffordshire and its people
- c) Public Confidence
- d) Service Reform.

### **COVID 19 (Staffordshire Police)- Update**

Staffordshire Police's approach to policing Covid-19 had been governed by a Gold structure (Op Jafar) which at its height was meeting 3 times a week, more recently fortnightly. Since August, with the rise again of infections and the imposition of further changes to Covid legislation and restrictions, the Gold group has stepped up its frequency once again to weekly.

The focus of the response to Covid-19 is as follows:

- Compliance and Enforcement
- Workforce -
- Workplace - Covid secure
- Operation Affinity (Impact of the EU Exit)

The Commissioner informed the Panel that the number of Covid cases amongst the police force had nearly doubled recently and he paid tribute to all the emergency services for their support and approach to “encouraging” individuals to comply with rules rather than the “heavy handed” approach adopted in some areas.

This led to a question on the impact of the new tier system and the enforcement of new regulations. The panel was informed that it was more complex, but the principle was to treat individuals as adults and encourage compliance.

The initial lockdown period had led to a reduction in crime which was due to several factors including pub closures and more working from home

### **Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Staffordshire Police – Update**

The Panel considered the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners update on the current Medium-Term Financial Strategy covering the years 2021/21 to 2023/24.

The outturn forecast for the current year was £212.232m. This was a positive variance of £0.170m (0.08%) against the annual net revenue budget of £212.402m.

The review of the current MTFS highlighted that 93% of current year savings have been delivered. However, it did identify a number of savings that were at high risk of non-delivery, slippage in delivery or have been impacted on by external events such as the Governments Uplift programme. These total £0.801m over the four-year MTFS period. These will continue to be reviewed.

New pressures totalling £1.528m for 2021/22 had been identified by directorates:

- Of these, just under half (£0.736m) relate to national increases in costs such as Home Office IT charges (£0.319m), increase in national airwave charges (£0.127m) and the National Police Air Service (£0.290m). These are outside of local control.
- Of those pressures identified as ‘local pressures’ a number of these relate to inflationary pressures above the estimate contained in the MTFS for inflation (Insurance £0.160m), Fleet costs, in part as a result of greater usage due to increasing Officer numbers, (£0.131m), reduction in specific income streams (£0.178m)
- A pressure of £0.055m has been included due to the planned increase in Special Constabulary Numbers to cover of the expenses of Special Constables.

The possibility of local Police Officers being transferred to areas with higher levels of crime was discussed. The Commissioner confirmed that work was being undertaken nationally to ensure that this would be from areas that could accommodate the reduction and governance would not be lost.

The report stated that there would be a continued growth in the Police Officer numbers through 2021/22 and 2022/23. For the current year the uplift had been 90 Officers (in addition to replacing those retiring and leaving); based on the Home Office applying the same distribution formula at a local level this would result in an additional 120 in 2021/22 and 90 in 2022/23. This was on the back of the

Commissioners investment in Police Officer numbers since 2017/18 which would result, by the end of 2022/23, in an additional 391 Officers since 2017/18. The Panel were concerned that the increase in Staffordshire numbers may not materialise as originally envisaged.

### **Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire - Update**

Due to Covid-19 the elections for Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners, were postponed until 7 May 2021. When the election is held, it will be for a reduced, three-year term with the following election scheduled for May 2024. In the interim period, the Commissioner determined that his priorities, as set out in the Strategy would remain broadly the same for his extended term of office:

- Modern Policing: A police force that is fit for a changing future
- Early Intervention: Tackling root causes before they become a problem
- Supporting Victims and Witnesses: Making it easier for victims and witnesses to get the support they need, when they need it
- Managing Offenders: Preventing offending in the first place and reducing the likelihood of reoffending
- Public Confidence: Creating opportunities for communities to shape policing, with greater transparency and openness to increase confidence in policing.

### **Implementation of Reforms to the Police Misconduct and Complaints Regulations 2020**

A report was considered that updated the Panel on the implementation of Police Misconduct and Complaints Reforms, as set out in the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020 which came into place on 1 February 2020. Up to the end of September 2020, the Commissioner's Office had received 25 requests for a review. Between the 1st October and the 12th October an additional 7 requests have been received making the total 32.

For more information on these meetings or on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in general please contact Mandy Pattinson (01785 278502 e mail [mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:mandy.pattinson@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.*

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Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Chairman