

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 14 February 2022.

The main items considered were:

Appointment of Chairman for the Meeting

Councillor Tony Holmes be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

No questions were submitted in time for this meeting.

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

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

1. Child Exploitation and Missing Services - 008
SCP-D-202122-008.pdf (staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk)

There were no questions on the decision. Cllr Edgeller expressed her appreciation for the work of the service and the continued support of the Commissioner.

Proposed Fire and Rescue Budget and Precept 2022/23

The Commissioner introduced his report which set out the proposed budget and precept proposals for the Fire and Rescue Authority for 2022/23.

The Panel received a presentation from the Commissioners Chief Finance Officer, which was considered along with the Fire Revenue Budget Report (including the MTFS and Precept).

It was reported that the Settlement Funding for 2022/23 had been confirmed at £13.652million, made up of; Revenue Support Grant (RSG) which had been set at £4.923million; Local Business Rates revenue of £2.670million and Business Top up of £6.059million. It was noted that the RSG had reduced by £9million since 2012. The total budget requirement for the service was £42,472million. The Commissioner was proposing to part fund the balance from Council Tax funding of £28.532 million and proposed an increase of 1.99% per annum (£1.57 pa per Band

D property). The Commissioner informed the Panel that this figure was in line with the referendum limit. Consultation on the proposed budget had resulted in 70% support for the increase.

Referring to Appendix 1 of the report, it was explained that the Pay costs for 2022/23 had increased by £1 million due to an assumption of pay increase of 3%. It was noted that there were also significant risks and uncertainties beyond 2022/23 which included the impact of national pay awards, implications of the Sargeant/McCloud High Court judgment on pension costs and risks associated with cost increases and the upcoming formula funding review and high levels of inflation. All of which made future planning a challenge.

The Panel also considered the following documents:

- The **Treasury Management Strategy** for 2022/23 which set out proposals for the management of the Fire Authorities cash flows, borrowing and investments and the risks.
- The **Reserves Strategy update** paper considered the overall level of reserves held by the Authority at 31 March 2022. The paper focused on two key areas of reserves that impacted on the future financial strategy. These were the General Reserve balance forecast as at 31 March was £1.9million and Earmarked (specific) Reserves, to meet future or predicted requirements balance at 31 March 2022 was forecast to be £7.5million.
- The Fire Authorities **Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2024/25** (Including Minimum Revenue Provision Policy).

It was explained that the transformation programme was key in order to deliver savings and that there were a number of areas which were being worked upon, all aligned to the Safety Plan 2020/24 and the Fire Plan 2021-24. These were:

- Corporate Reform
- Response and crewing reform
- Prevention and Protection reform
- Estates and shared services reform.

Following a question on how the efficiency savings (pay efficiency and non pay efficiency) on appendix 7 would be met (both lines £156,000) and their relationship to the transformation plan savings of £2million, it was reported that the overall £306,000 was split evenly between the two budget heads and would be achieved as a result of the transformation plan. They were therefore part of the same saving. The Commissioner felt that the transformation plan savings were achievable but would be challenging.

It was explained that on Appendix One, the PFI unitary charges of £3.003 million were as a result of the service having 21 PFI Fire stations of which

there were 2 PFI contracts. These incurred charges for facility management and lifecycle costs etc. The Premises costs of £3.897 million were made up of cost on the residual estate; HQ; Joint Emergency Transport and general running costs.

The General Income of £3.3million would be generated through:

- Special Services Grant of £663,000 issued by Central Government to primarily cover the costs of National Insurance increases (this will be split and carried forward to future years)
- Business Rates S.31 Grants - £1.4m
- General Fees and Charges (see appendix 10) incl. conference facilities
- Police service level agreements for shared premises e.g. Hanley and Tamworth
- There may be potential to increase income further through the Commissioner's joint estates strategy by sharing more buildings. In addition arrangements with the CCU, for example, helping with the vaccination programme and booster programmes and use of buildings.

If savings could not be made or income generated, it was reported that reserves would have to be used in the short term and the Strategy would be reviewed.

The Panel adjourned to consider their response to the Commissioners budget and precept proposals. Upon reconvening the Panel agreed the recommendations in the report which included the proposed budget and Precept increase 1.99% (£1.57 per annum, per household (Band D)).

Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan 2020-2024 Update Report

The report provided the Panel with an update on the delivery of the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan (SP), Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Following the transfer of governance from the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority to the Staffordshire Commissioner, a new Safety Plan 2020-2024 was developed which was published in August 2020.

The Safety Plan was designed to underpin the Staffordshire Commissioners Fire and Rescue Plan and four priorities for the Service were determined following consultation across Staffordshire in 2020.

The four priorities outlined in the current Commissioners Fire and Rescue Plan were:

- A flexible and responsive service
- Protect people and places

- Help people most at risk stay safe
- A fire and rescue service for tomorrow

Detail on the priorities and the progress to date was contained in the report.

Following a question on the relationship between the Fire Service and Housing Associations, the Commissioner agreed that liaison with housing companies throughout the County needed to be developed and would be looked at. There was an expectation that Fire services would be more involved with building regulations in future.

The way that building inspections were prioritised and audited was discussed. It was explained that this was risk based and the methodology would be sent to the Panel for information.

With regard to the retro fitting of sprinklers and the rational of match funding for one project, it was asked if this had set a precedent for other, private landlords to apply. It was explained that this was a programme aimed at large buildings at the moment. The Commissioner agreed to investigate the cost of the programme and its effectiveness.

The Panel asked the Commissioner to pass on their thanks to the service for their help during the pandemic, particularly helping with the rollout of the vaccination programme.

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	Response
With regard to the first meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Strategic Community Forum, the Commissioner was asked for his views.	It had given the Chief Fire Officer an opportunity to talk to the new Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Service and offer the services support and assistance in preventing fire and accidents. Similarly, the Chief Constable had been able to discuss issues around addiction and mental health.

Webcast can be found at [Browse meetings - Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel - Staffordshire County Council](#)

For more information on these meetings or on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in general please contact Mandy Pattinson e mail 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.

Councillor Tony Holmes, Chairman for the Meeting
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel