

**Minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Meeting  
held on 14 February 2022**

Present:

Adrian Bowen  
Ann Edgeller  
Gill Heesom  
Tony Holmes

Bryan Jones  
Roger Lees  
Keith Walker  
Tina Clements (Substitute)

**Also in attendance:** Ben Adams, Helen Fisher, Ralph Butler, David Greensmith, Emma Christmas (Observer representing the ETAP).

**Apologies:** Lesley Adams, Richard Cox, Philip Hudson and Bernard Peters

**PART ONE**

**56. Appointment of Chairman for the Meeting**

**RESOLVED:** Councillor Tony Holmes be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

**57. Declarations of interest**

No declarations were made at the meeting.

**58. Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2022**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Panel meeting held on 31 January 2022 approved and signed by the Chairman.

**59. Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public**

No questions were submitted in time for this meeting.

**60. 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 was no questions on the decision. Cllr Edgeller expressed her appreciation for the work of the service and the continued support of the Commissioner.

**RESOLVED** – That the decisions be noted.

## **61. 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 unanimously:

## **RESOLVED:**

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. The total 2022/23 net revenue budget requirement of £42.472million including a council tax requirement for 2022/23 of £28.532 million before collection fund surplus/deficits, be noted.
- b. That the proposed budget and Precept increase of 1.99% (£1.57 per annum, per household (Band D)) be supported and the Commissioner be notified accordingly.
- c. That the Council Tax base increase to 355,100 properties, equivalent to an increase of 1.84% and the Council Tax collection fund delivering a surplus of £288,100 and the option to spread the £102,000 per annum deficit attributable to Covid-19 over 3 years (this being the second) be noted.
- d. The MTFS summary financials and MTFS assumptions as detailed in the report, be noted.
- e. That the savings requirement of c£2 million during the MTFS period and the net use of reserves of £0.3m be noted.
- f. That the proposed three-year Capital Investment Programme and the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme Paper be noted.
- g. That the reduction in business rates for 2022/23 following the receipt of NNDR1 returns, including a collection deficit of £0.8million be noted.
- h. That the outcome of the Staffordshire Commissioner's budget consultation be noted.
- i. That the proposed fees and charges for 2022/23 be noted.
- j.** That the Statement from the Director of Finance / S151 Officer on the robustness of the Budget and adequacy of the proposed financial reserves be noted.

## **62. 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.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) That the report be received
- b) That information on the rational of building inspections be forwarded to the Panel for information.

**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:

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
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.

#### **64. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme**

The reserved date of 22 February (Precept setting) was no longer needed for a meeting and would be cancelled.

The Chairman asked for detail of the Fire Service Transformation plans, as discussed in the previous item, to be added to the MTFs update report in October 2022.

**RESOLVED** – That the dates future meetings be noted.

**Chairman**