

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 24 October 2022.

The main items considered were:

Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

Question 1

In total how many Police Fire and Crime Panel (PFCP) and Ethical Transparency and Audit Panel (ETAP) meetings have there been?

Over the last 4 years (since 2019)

PFCP response: 23 Panel meetings.

ETAP response: 22 ETAP meetings

Question 2 Out of these meetings how many times has a member of the public turned up or put forward a question?

Panel Response: the number of public attending Panel meetings to watch the proceedings is not recorded. The number of people asking questions at panel meetings is:

Year	Meetings	Questions	People attended the meeting to ask questions in person
2019	6	3	1
2020	3	0	0
2021	8	3	0
2022	6	5	3

ETAP response:

Year	Meetings (Cover both Police and Fire)	Questions	People attended the meeting to ask questions in person
2019	6	0	1
2020	5	0	0
2021	5	0	0
2022	6	0	0

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

No decisions had been posted on the Commissioners website since the last meeting.

Medium Term Financial Strategy - update - Police

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update report for the Police services was presented by the Commissioner and his Director of Finance.

The report set out:

- The current position of the 2022/23 budget
- An update on future years MTFS assumptions
- Sensitivity analysis around key financial items
- An update on the capital programme.

It was reported that since setting the budget in January 2022, the financial assumptions had changed dramatically. It was felt that the current level of uncertainty in the economy with rising levels of inflation; pay award uncertainty; unpredictable investment returns; and pension increases, made budget predictions very challenging.

The table in the report at paragraph 1.9 showed the key movements in the MTFS position since January 2022. Despite in-year pressures, the current position for 2022/23 was a forecast underspend of £0.9m. However, there was a change in predicted funding gap from £2.1m to £6.3m in 2025/26.

As a result of the Commissioners presentation and questions from the Panel, the following information was shared with the Panel. This was in addition to that provided in the written report:

- Since the MTFS was set, the HMICFRS inspection report had resulted in the need to invest in the policing model. Examples of investment were given as included technology improvements, vehicles etc. The Panel would receive a full update on these investments and their impact, at the February 2023 panel meeting.
- For planning purposes, the increase in precept had been planned at 2.99% for the years 2023/24 onwards. It was noted that currently, the government's spending review had awarded the flexibility on the precept of £10 per annum, which would be an increase of approximately 4.09% for Staffordshire.
- Following a question on how the expected gap in funding would be covered, the Commissioner explained that if the funding didn't come from government, an increase in precept may have to be considered and/or efficiencies would be explored, particularly through the use of technology. The use of reserves could be considered if necessary.
- Projections of inflation rates in future years was more challenging than in previous years. Assumptions had been estimated for future years, but this may need readjusting.
- Savings and income generating could be gained through: additional grants; Regional organised crime unit; secondments etc. The panel

was informed that other forces were having conversations with partners such as the NHS to be compensated for work undertaken, which it was felt should be covered by other teams, for example mental health. However, similar financial pressures were faced by all the partners.

- The prudent approach and the estimated saving of £0.9m in this financial year was acknowledged.

The Panel noted the report.

Medium Term Financial Strategy - update - Fire and Rescue Service

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy update report for the Fire and Rescue services was presented by the Commissioner and his Director of Finance.

The report set out:

- The current position of the 2022/23 budget
- An update on future years MTFS assumptions
- Sensitivity analysis around key financial items
- Transformation update
- An update on the capital programme.

Similar financial assumptions had been made to that in the earlier Police MTFS report.

There was extra uncertainty with the pay negotiations for the Fire service which was currently estimated at 5%, as opposed to the anticipated 2%.

It was acknowledged that currently the increased service costs had been offset by cost savings. This was despite the unitary charge for some of the transformational programme PFI fire stations being variable and was now 8.3% which was a significant increase. This was expected to increase in future years.

It was noted that fuel costs were estimated at a 5% increase for fire and rescue, whilst for Police this was set at 2%. It was explained that officers' predictions were different but fuel contracts were procured in the same way for both police and fire and rescue services.

The Panel noted the report.

Fire and Rescue - Annual Assurance Statement 2021/22

The Panel considered the draft Fire and Rescue Statement of Assurance for 2021/22. It was reported that the statement would be considered at the Commissioners' next ETAP (fire) meeting with the final version being sent to the Panel for information.

The Panel noted the report

Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members

The Panel asked questions and received the following responses:

a, when would the Travellers strategy be ready and distributed to Local Authorities/partners?

In response, the Panel was informed that the Policy was being reviewed and considered by the Community Safety Forum. It would then be distributed to all partners so that a consistent approach could be used throughout Staffordshire.

b, was the new policing operating model having an impact on public reassurance?

In response, all officer ranks were out meeting residents and informing of issues in the local areas. The Commissioner expected the new approach, to have a positive impact.

c, how would the monitoring of Police performance, particularly relating to the HMICFRS inspection report and the impact on residents be communicated?

The performance meetings with the Chief Constable would continue and the Panel would receive regular updates on the Commissioners strategic plan and how the force was meeting his strategic priorities. Communication with both partners and the public was important to highlight improvement.

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
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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 Richard Cox, Vice Chair (in the Chair)
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel