

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 6 February 2023.

The main items considered were:

Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

The Panel considered the questions ask by member of the public and the Commissioners written response. See link below for detail.

There had been on **Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)** since the last meeting.

Proposed Police Budget and Precept 2023/24

The Commissioner introduced his report which set out the proposed budget and precept proposals for the Police and Crime element of his portfolio for 2023/24. He reported that the proposed budget/precept showed a total net revenue budget requirement of £242.902million for 2023/04. The report also included details of the Home Office Police Grant for Staffordshire which had been set at £129.860 million, an increase of £.450 million on the previous year. Other sources of funding were from the Police Pension Grant £1.825million; uplift ring-fenced grant £4,100 million; Council Tax freeze grant £3.541million; and Revenue Support Grant of £8.423million.

The Commissioner was proposing to part fund the balance from Council Tax funding of £93,883,136 with an increase of 4.83% per annum (an increase of £12 per annum) increasing the Council tax to £260.57 p.a. per Band D property.

The Police Officer pay award was set nationally and the MTFs included an amount based on Home Office guidance and forecasting. It was reported that if the settlement was higher than anticipated next year, any gap in funding would hopefully be funded by Government.

The Commissioner stated that he was confident that the proposed budget was adequate to deliver the services Staffordshire needed. It allowed for an additional 60 Officers in 2023/34.

Savings made during 2022/23 had been achieved and had enabled investment in technology to reduce car crime and provision of automated number plate recognition software.

The Commissioner was confident that the budget balanced what the public wanted to see in terms of value for money and improvements and also gave the Chief Constable sufficient funds to address the HMICFRS inspection report findings and invest in technology and personnel. The Commissioners office would continue to invest in prevention; diversionary activities for young people and supporting victims.

The Panel received a presentation from the Chief Finance Officer, which was considered along with the report which included the following:

1. Budget Report 2023/24 including MTFS
2. Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24
3. Reserves Strategy update
4. Capital Strategy and Capital Programme

The **Treasury Management Strategy** for 2023/24 set out proposals for the management of the Commissioner's cash flows, borrowing and investments and their associated risks.

The **Reserves Strategy update** paper considered the overall level of reserves held at 31 March 2022 and the forecast position at 31 March 2023 and into the medium term.

The **Capital Strategy and Capital Programme** (Including Minimum Revenue Provision Policy) set out the long-term capital investment and investment decisions.

The Panel were asked to note the statement made by the Commissioner's CFO on the robustness of the budget and adequacy of the proposed financial reserves as required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 as contained within section 9 of the main report.

A summary of the results of the public and stakeholder engagement survey which had been carried out by the Commissioner was included in the papers.

The Panel was reminded that the new Firearms Facility would in the main, be used by Staffordshire officers and the investment would not rely on generating external revenue. Work had taken place to see if there was a possibility of sharing facilities, but this had not proven feasible.

The following information was also gained through questioning:

- Staffordshire was reported as being a low crime area but also a low cost service. Despite evidence to suggest that Staffordshire had low crime levels, the public in some areas of the County felt that this was not the case. There was no evidence to suggest that the public were not reporting crime. The Commissioner was carrying out a piece of work into the links between crime levels and public perception. This would be brought before the Panel when complete.
- When asked if PCSO's could be given more powers, it was explained that the Chief Constable felt that these powers should remain with Police officers and if there were problems in localities with Parking or speeding, warranted officers would address them. The new Policing Model was seeing progress but was still being embedded. This had been discussed at the recent Performance meeting with the Chief Constable <https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/transparency/public-meetings/>
- There was a question on Burton Police station and the possibility of the cell block reopening. The panel was informed that the new operating model was looking at this. Safety and standards were important, but locality was always considered.
- The Commissioner felt that appropriate levels of reserves remained within the budget should they be required.
- Inflation going forward could create uncertainty as could the Police pay award 2023/24.
- Guidance had been issued by the Home Office and this had been followed in terms of budget assumptions. The higher end of the guidance had been followed with regard to pay awards and it was hoped that anything higher would be met by the Home Office.
- The use of green technology for fleet vehicles was discussed. It was explained that this was being looked at, particularly charging capacity, and developing technologies. Local policing and the use of electric bikes was an opportunity.
- The £175,000 non allocated savings were still to be allocated.
- When asked what projects had been removed from the Capital Programme, the Commissioner was unsure but agreed to provide the panel with detail.

The Panel acknowledged the challenging situation facing the Commissioner but felt that this was a high increase in precept and the public needed to be assured that this would lead to visible results in the communities. The Commissioner agreed and suggested a briefing to the 21 February Panel meeting containing a summary of where the investments have been made following last year's precept increase, thus demonstrating past delivery. Some examples provided were:

- New officers
- Contact team
- Operating model
- Investment in technology for officers

The Panel adjourned to consider their response to the Commissioners budget and precept proposals. Upon reconvening the Panel agreed:

1. In relation to the Budget and Precept setting:

- b) That the budget investment required to deliver a further growth of 60 FTE police officers in 2023/24, taking police officer headcount to 2,000 be noted and supported.
- c) That the proposed budget and Precept increase of 4.83% (£12.00 per annum, per household (Band D)) be supported and the Commissioner be notified accordingly.
- d) That the Council Tax base increased to 360,299 band D equivalent properties, equivalent to an increase of 1.46% be noted along with the council tax collection fund surplus of £1.270m.
- e) That the use of £0.361m of revenue reserves to balance the 2023/24 budget (in addition to use of other earmarked reserves to support identified purposes) be noted.
- f) That the MTFS summary financials and MTFS assumptions as contained in the report be noted.
- g) That the Support the delegation to the Director of Finance for the Staffordshire Commissioners Office and the Chief Finance Officer of Staffordshire Police to make any necessary adjustments to the budget as a result of late changes to central government funding (including changes due to the final funding settlement being announced) via an appropriation to or from the general fund reserve be noted.
- h) That the proposed four-year Capital Investment Programme totalling £48.264m and the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme Paper be noted.
- i) That the outcome of the Staffordshire Commissioner's budget consultation within the Commissioners foreword which included a survey regarding the proposed level of precept for 2023/24 be noted.

2. Future work programme items:

- The work into the links between crime levels and public perception be considered by the Panel when complete.
- a briefing summarising the investments that had been made following the 2022/23 precept increase be included in the report to the 21st February 2023 meeting.

3. Information following the Panel meeting

- Information on the projects that had been removed from the Capital Programme, be provide to the panel.

National Conference for Police, Fire and Crime Panels (PFCCP) and NAPFCCP AGM - 11 November 2022

The Panel received a report from its member representatives at the AGM of the National Conference for Police, Fire and Crime Panels, held on 11 November 2022.

Workshops attended as part of the National Conference had included discussions on 'Being a critical friend' and 'Measuring Panel Performance'. The report was noted.

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 1 – Would the Commissioner come to look at the parking issues outside some of the schools in Stafford?

Response: Agreed along with the Deputy Commissioner. All members were asked to let their local police know when problems occurred.

Question 2 - The future of Stafford Police station and the Fire Station was questioned.

Response: Decisions on Estates were being made during this financial year.

Question 3 – When would the incompatibility of technology be rectified? Reference was made to CCTV data from the District Councils which could not be downloaded by the police.

Response: This would be looked at the responded to separately.

Question 4 – When would defibrillators be on all police vehicles?

Response: The right people need to respond to medical emergencies although it was acknowledged that they were useful pieces of equipment.

Statement 1 – It was felt that EV chargers for police cars could be prioritised in towns if the fleet were to invest in electric technology.

Statement 2 – Thanks were offered to Speed watch.

Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme - The next meeting of the Panel would be held on 13 February 2023 to consider the Fire and Rescue Budget and Precept 2023/24.

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