

**Minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Meeting held on 26
October 2020**

Present: Stephen Sweeney (Chairman)

Lesley Adams	Tony Holmes
Stephen Doyle	Helena Maxfield
Ann Edgeller (until 2.30pm)	Alan Pearson
Brian Edwards	Keith Walker
Simon Gaskin	Ashley Yeates
Ray Sutherland (Sub. for A Edgeller after 2.30pm)	

Also in attendance: Matthew Ellis, Glynn Dixon, David Greensmith.

Apologies: Paul Darby

PART ONE

65. Declarations of interest

None were made at the meeting.

66. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2020

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Panel meeting held on 13 July 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

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

1. Tamworth Belgrave Shared Estate

<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCPF-D-202021-002.pdf>

2. Crest Support to LCJB Performance Framework Product

<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCP-D-202021-002-4.pdf>

The Commissioner updated the Panel on the work taking place with Crest to create a criminal justice dashboard. Lobbying was taking place to get more Courts open, however Covid regulations was limiting this.

3. Space 2020

<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCP-D-202021-003>.

The panel were pleased that this was continuing.

4. Purchase of X2 Taser Devices

<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCP-D-202021-004>.

The Panel asked if there had been more than one quote for the supply of tasers. It was informed that the purchase was done for the whole of Policing across the country and there was only one approved supplier in the United Kingdom.

Referring to a previous decision of the PFCC, a question was asked on the accommodation of Community Groups in the new **Hanley Fire Station**. It was agreed that information on where groups had moved to would be provided to the panel.

68. Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

No questions were submitted.

69. COVID 19 (Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service) - Update

Since the last update to the Panel in July 2020 the Service have 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.

RESOLVED: That the work that SFRS had delivered during the COVID19 pandemic be noted.

70. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Fire and Rescue Service- Update

The Panel considered the update on the current Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The report set out 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.

Looking forward, it was not currently known what Central Government Grant would be available for 2021/22. The impact of Covid-19 on Authority finances may also be severe and the report made assessment of the likely impact of a deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund and also a reducing Council Tax Base and lower business rates collected.

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.

Following questions from the Panel, it was confirmed that Utility suppliers were reviewed each year as part of the ongoing financial challenges and the business pooling arrangements benefited the service in the region of £200,000 and the PFCC Office £100,000.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the information contained within this updated MTFS report.

71. Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan 2020 /24 - Update

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 in 2020 across Staffordshire.

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.

It was hoped that the service would be able to get back to doing prevention work, particularly in schools, and the Princes Trust face to face programmes soon. The recruitment of 52 new officers was welcomed.

RESOLVED: The delivery of the Safety Pan was noted.

72. 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 statistics which was due to several factors including pub closures and more working from home.

RESOLVED: The delivery of the Safety Pan was noted.

73. 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 report set out 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 Group (Commissioner and Staffordshire Police) 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 Panel was reminded that the key assumptions for the Police budget would be the same as those discussed under the previous Fire and Rescue MTFS report. The collection deficit was estimated at £3.3m over the next 3 years and the Council tax deficit £886,000 per year.

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 Government's 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.

A question was asked on the possibility of local Police Officers being transferred to areas of higher levels of crime as mentioned in section 4.5 of the report. 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 uplift in officer numbers would continue to see growth in the Police Officer numbers through 2021/22 and 2022/23. For the current year this 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 Commissioner's investment in Police Officer numbers since 2017/18 which would result, by the end of 2022/23, of an additional 391 Officers since 2017/18. The Panel felt that numbers may not be as originally promised.

RESOLVED: The report was noted.

74. Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire - Update

In May 2017, the Staffordshire Commissioner for Police, Fire and Rescue, and Crime (Staffordshire Commissioner) published an updated Safer, Fairer, United Communities strategy for 2017–2020. An annual report covering the entire period of the Commissioner's two terms of office was submitted to the panel in February 2020.

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.

A question was asked on the reporting procedure when domestic violence had taken place in front of children and if schools were automatically informed. The Commissioner agreed to find the answer and respond to the Panel.

The Commissioner also offered to facilitate access to more information on the 'New Era' service which undertakes work to help individuals escaping abuse.

RESOLVED: The update was noted.

75. Implementation of Reforms to the Police Misconduct and Complaints Regulations 2020

The report 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. The Staffordshire Commissioner became the Appropriate Authority for reviews (formally known as appeals). The Commissioner now receives all reviews unless they are about a senior officer, criminal or misconduct proceedings, or article 2/3 (Human Rights), the review body for these is the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC).

A complaint review process map was attached to the report.

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.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the contents and agree to receive regular updates for scrutiny at future panel meetings.

76. 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/Issue	Response
Why was the Police Station in Kinver up for auction and what was the current position?	The Commissioner agreed to respond to the Panel with the information
Why were the Police Inspectors geographical areas so big? An example was given of a Sargent from Burton having to travel to Newcastle.	The Commissioner agreed to respond to the Panel with the information

<p>What was the current situation with the sale of Blyth Bridge Police Station?</p>	<p>The site is currently listed as a Community Asset. Its disposal will be processed when the listing formally expires.</p>
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77. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

It was noted that the Work Programme would be further developed following the election of PFCC in May 2021.

Members noted that dates for panel meetings scheduled up until April 2022:

- Monday 1 February 2021 (pm)
- Monday 15 February 2021 (pm)
- Monday 22 February 2021 (pm) (RESERVED)
- Monday 22 March 2021(pm)
- Monday 21 June 2021(pm)
- Member Monday 25 October 2021(pm)
- Monday 31 January 2022(pm)
- Monday 14 February 2022 (pm) (RESERVED)
- Monday 25 April 2022 (pm)

RESOLVED – That the scheduled dates be noted.

Chairman