

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 Monday 21 June 2021.

The main items considered were:

Appointment of Chairman - Councillor Bernard Peters was appointed Chairman of the Panel for the ensuring year.

Appointment of Vice-Chairman - Councillor Richard Cox was appointed Vice Chairman of the Panel for the ensuring year.

Appointment of Co-optee Member

The Panel are required to appoint two independent co-optee members. Mr Darbys term of office came to an end in May 2021 and a formal recruitment process had been followed which concluded in interviews being held on 15 June 2021. The Panel formally appoint Mr Adrian Bowen as co-optee member. A letter of thanks to Mr Darby would be sent from the Chairman.

Police Fire and Crime Commissioner - Ben Adams

Mr Adams was welcomed as the new Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire. Ben Adams introduced himself to the Panel and explained that his key objective was to keep Staffordshire residents safe. Although this was the early days of his term of office, he envisaged that this priority would include:

- Visible policing
- Improving regional relationships with partners such as West Midlands anti-terrorism
- Balancing the need to deal with changing crime methods and visible policing
- Sharing assets
- Recognising and addressing different challenges in different localities
- Working with communities
- Providing tools and training to both Police and Fire staff, to enable them to effectively deal with situations they face.

The Panel thanked Mr Adams for his presentation and after a number of questions the following information was noted:

- It was felt that the current balance between enforcement of Covid-19 regulations and encouraging the public to 'do the right thing' during periods of lockdown and social restrictions, was working well.
- There had been a recent rise in 999 calls with the easing of lockdown regulations.
- The number of domestic violence calls would be reviewed and brought to the panel if required.

- The impact of Covid on people's mental health and any increased need for police services would be assessed.
- The recent recruitment of Police officers/Cadets and Specials reflected the diverse population of the county.
- Community Safety Partnerships would be promoted, and partnership working would be essential in improving services.
- Response times for Police in some areas of the county was felt to be too slow, particularly in rural villages. Response vehicles were being positioned in places where they could respond quickly, and this was reviewed regularly.
- Inconsiderate parking and enforcement were an issue in some areas, particularly around schools. There was a range of powers available to different bodies and it was hoped that discussions with the County Council could take place to improve the situation.
- It was felt that PCSO's were less visible in some localities and this caused concern to the public. It was noted that the number of PCSO's had reduced slightly from 220 to 200 but they were being deployed where they were most needed. The aim was for more flexibility.
- The 101 system and its speed in responding to calls was raised and it was reported that this was a priority area as all public contact and information was essential in sharing information effectively.

The Commissioners Police and Crime Plan would be considered at the next meeting of the Panel.

Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

The Panel had received two questions from members of the public, one concerning the number of complaints made against Staffordshire Police and one concerning speeding in Burntwood. Both questions were listed in the report and the Commissioner had provided written responses.

The Panel felt that they would benefit from training on the complaints system for both Police and Fire service and asked for this to be arranged.

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

Details were submitted of decisions published by the Commissioner since the last Panel meeting. No further information was requested.

- a) Firefighters Pensions (injury awards) <https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCF-D-202122-001.pdf>
- b) Princes Trust Peer Mentoring Pilot <https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCP-D-202122-002.pdf>

Home Office Grant for 2020/21

The Panel received an annual report which provided information on the Home Office Grant allocated to the Panels host authority which was intended to meet the costs of the administrative support and management services of the panel. The Grant allocation for 2021/22 had not yet been received.

Annual Report on the Handling of Complaints against the Commissioner 2020/21

The Panel received an annual report which provided information on the number of complaints referred to the panel which relate to the personal conduct of the Commissioner and/or his Deputy.

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
Does CCTV figure in the Police and Crime Plan?	CCTV does offer the public reassurance. CCTV is primarily a Local Authority function. There was a need for partners to work together and make the best use of all CCTV including private systems. This may include shared monitoring facilities. The use of surveillance systems needed to be looked at in more detail. The Safer Streets Fund in Stoke on Trent had worked well and had included CCTV.
What are the Commissioners view on the Safer Neighbourhood Panels	To make these work effectively, it was important to keep a local influence, to listen to concerns and feed the information into improvement plans. The new commissioner wanted to retain these and develop them to worked together to provide valuable information. This was welcomed by the panel.
Could there be part funding for speed indicators to help to stop large vehicles going through small rural towns?	Joint funding with parish councils may be available. Speed information devises are common in most areas and is part of the Safer Road's Partnership. The Commissioner wanted to look at this in more depth.
The plan to increase Police numbers on the street was welcomed, but it was acknowledged that this was difficult to do in rural areas.	The Commissioner was hoping for imaginative approaches to more visible policing. Police were deployed in areas with most need.
Does the Commissioner envisage an increase in Police Cadet numbers and if so, how would this happen?	The Cadets scheme had been a great success. This was not a recruitment route but an opportunity for young people to develop and meet new people.
Operation Hub and Firing range. Would this be an improvement and how much would this cost?	A business plan was being worked on. This item was in the Panels work programme.

Consideration of the Appointment of a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The report of the Secretary to the Panel informed members that, in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the Panel was

required to hold a Confirmation Hearing following receipt of formal notification by the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner of his wish to appoint his Deputy Commissioner.

The report explained that guidance on the role of the Panel recommended that through questioning of the candidate they consider her 'professional competence' and 'personal independence'.

Presentation by and questions to Helen Fisher

Helen Fisher briefly summarised her business and political career which included Councillor for Burntwood Town Council, Lichfield District Council and Staffordshire County Council.

The Panel questioned Helen Fisher on various issues including how she would support the Commissioner, how she would measure her own success, how she would bring about change and if she intended to be a visible presence or work behind the scenes.

In response Mrs Fisher replied that she would provide the support that the Commissioner needed and that it was a little early to say the precise role she would take. She was a good communicator and intended to talk and listen to the public and help to engage with them and develop services to meet their needs. Mrs Fisher gave examples where she had acted independently during her time as a Cabinet member at the County Council and had also enabled members to provide their own solutions to local highway problems through delegated funding.

The Panel adjourned to consider the appointment and on their return the Chairman informed the Commissioner that the Panel had unanimously agreed to the appointment of Helen Fisher as the Deputy Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire.

Consideration of the Proposed Appointment to the Post of Interim Chief Constable for Staffordshire

The Secretary to the Panel reported that, in accordance with Schedule 8 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the Panel were required to hold a Confirmation Hearing following receipt of formal notification by the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner of his wish to appoint his preferred candidate, Emma Barnett, to the post of Temporary Chief Constable for Staffordshire.

The report explained that guidance on the role of the Panel recommended that through questioning of the candidate, they consider her 'professional competence' and 'personal independence'. To assist, the Panel had been provided with documentary evidence of the process followed by the Commissioner when recruiting to the post and selecting his preferred candidate.

As the post was temporary, the timescales for a permanent appointment had also been provided.

Presentation by and questions to Emma Barnett

Ms Barnett briefly summarised her career in the Police Service having served in a number of Force areas ranging from inner City Birmingham to Counties. She had been appointed as Assistant Chief Constable in 2016 and Deputy Chief Constable in 2020.

The Panel questioned Ms Barnett on various issues including visible policing, performance measures, demands of the pandemic, sharing and gathering information/intelligence.

In response, Ms Barnett stated that it was important that the police were visible but there were different ways to communicate with the public and share information. Team working and partnerships were crucial. Dealing with the Covid crisis had been difficult at times and understanding the new 'normal' and dealing with the effects of the pandemic would be challenging. Partnership working at all levels was viewed as essential for creating efficiencies and sharing information. There was also a constant need to be aware of the effects of Covid and the pressures it had put on staff both physically and mentally.

The Panel adjourned to consider the appointment and on their return the Chairman informed the Commissioner that the Panel had unanimously agreed to the appointment of Emma Barnett as the Temporary Chief Constable for Staffordshire.

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 Bernard Peters
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Chairman