

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 13 November 2023.

The Panel was informed that Cllr Zrupski had replaced Cllr Fitzpatrick, representing East Staffordshire Borough Council.

The main items of business were:

Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

The Panel considered the questions ask by members of the public and the Commissioners responses. There were no supplementary questions asked at the meeting. It was reported that a further 2 questions had been received since the publication of the agenda, but a response had not been possible within the timeframe. The questioner would be provided with a response as soon as it was available and given an opportunity to have the questions and responses added to the next public agenda if they wished.

Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC). No decisions had been posted on the Commissioners website since the last meeting.

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

- The current position of the 2023/24 budget
- An update on future years MTFS assumptions
- Sensitivity analysis around key financial items
- An update on the capital programme.

Movement in the MTFS position since the it was set in February 2023 was listed in paragraph 4.2 of the report. The current position for 2023/24 showed a forecast (at the end of Quarter 2) of £242.472m. This was a positive variance of £0.476m against the annual net revenue budget of £242.947m.

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

- The 'targeted removals' as mentioned in paragraph 7.7 of the report were reported as having no business impact and being for small amounts, such as an estates project in the sum of £100k.
- Following a question on why loans were being repaid rather than using the funds to invest in services, it was reported that these were scheduled repayments so there was little option to do otherwise.
- The reserves remained in line with recommended levels. The Commissioner felt that budget reserves were in a good position.
- It was confirmed that the budget covered the growth in wages of new recruits progressing through their training and had also managed to accommodate changes in levels of staff moving into the county during the year.
- The Panel felt that knowing the criteria used to assess savings and priorities would have been useful.
- It was requested that in future budget/MTFS reports, the Commissioner include appendices covering the Capital programme and detailed lines in the budget.

The Panel noted the report and recommended that in future, the budget/MTFS update reports include an appendix covering the Capital programme and detailed lines in the budget.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 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 2023/24 budget
- An update on future years MTFS assumptions
- Sensitivity analysis around key financial items
- Transformation update
- Key investment areas
- An update on the capital programme.

Similar financial assumptions had been made to that in the earlier Police MTFS report. There was a positive position at the 6 month stage, with the total revenue spend as at 30 September being £23m, showing a slightly favourable position against the budget of £23.3m.

Paragraph 4.4 of the report outlined the risks as:

- Pay
- Pensions
- Utility costs and insurance
- Council tax and referendum limit assumptions
- Revenue support grant

During the discussion and question and answer session, the following information was gained:

- The Panel raised the public's concerns over fire personnel safety and questioned investment in the service. It was clarified that investment in equipment was on track, however, technology and systems were reported as being 'outdated' (paragraph 7.3 (9b)). This referred to the back-office admin ICT systems for performance data and reporting. There was also an investment required for 'fire control' software which was a shared service with West Midlands Fire and Rescue which had recently had an upgrade but was due another. The Commissioner reported that this was part of a conversation he would be having with the public over investment in these areas.
- When asked what a 'flexible responses with a 3% increased productivity target' would look like, it was reported that one of the ways this could be achieved was through the team of 3 crews. The result of this trial would be reported to the panel when it was available. The budget implication would be evaluated but the Commissioner felt that the real benefit was to the service and productivity.
- There was concern that dealing with flooding was not a statutory function but was dealt with in a rescue capacity. The Commissioner stated that he would welcome this being a statutory duty as this would provide opportunity for increased investment and funding.
- Batteries and the risks involved in recharging was a concern. Christmas provided an opportunity to communicate safety with the public.

The Panel noted the report and recommended that in future, the budget/MTFS update reports include an appendix covering the Capital programme and detailed lines in the budget. The results of the crew of three trial, would also be reported to the Panel when available.

The Panel considered the draft **Fire and Rescue Statement of Assurance** for 2022/23. It was reported that the statement was also considered at the Commissioners Ethics Transparency and Audit Panel (ETAP) (Fire) Group.

It was reported that the plan had been extended by a year so that it covered the same time period as the Commissioners term of office.

The document was a Statement of Assurance from the service, the Community Risk Management Plan had wider public input and the Commissioners Fire and Rescue Plan had public input.

The Falls service was commissioned by the Integrated Care Board. Control centres assess the patient's needs and are trained to identify situations where ambulance staff are needed. Fire fighters were not normally involved in medical care. Various initiatives were being

discussed where Fire and Rescue could help support the Ambulance service. The detail of any initiatives and training needs would be brought back to the Panel at a later date.

The Commissioners ETAP meetings produced various reports for both Fire and Rescue and the Police service and made recommendations on service efficiency and finance. The Commissioner reported that he was satisfied that the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable took on board the recommendations and these were reported through the Performance meetings with the Commissioner.

The detail on small outdoor fire which had shown an increase on previous years, would be raised at the performance meeting on the 14 November.

The Panel noted the report and recommended that the detail of any initiatives where Fire and Rescue could help support the Ambulance service and any training needs would be brought back to the Panel at a later date.

The Panel asked questions and received the following responses:

1) How were the Police dealing with the changes in legislation on Big Dogs?

In response, the Panel was informed that the Police were taking appropriate action when required which, ranged from providing advice to removing animals if absolutely necessary.

2) Was there evidence that the Police Constable and Fire Chief were taking action to address both the local and national concerns of officers misbehaviour?

In response, the Panel was reminded that they did consider Police complaints on an annual basis and the Commissioners performance meetings with both services also considered this concern in a public arena. The Commissioner gave his total commitment to addressing this issue.

3) How did the Commissioner feel about the high turnover of Police Commanders in some local areas?

The Commissioner welcomed officers having the opportunity to move to other services and gain experience and knowledge, but did acknowledge that this could result in frequent moves. However, this was an operational issue and there was always a team of highly competent officers available to step up and cover roles.

4) How were the Police responding to tensions and crime against the Jewish and Muslim communities?

The Commissioner was aware of increased Police awareness and the service were supporting the London demonstrations and any local remembrance services, if needed. He was not aware of any incidents in Staffordshire.

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 Bernard Peters (Chair)
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel