

North Yorkshire County Council

Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Minutes of the remote meeting held by Teams on Thursday 15 October 2020, commencing at 10:30am.

Present:-

Councillors: Keith Aspden (City of York Council), Michael Chambers MBE (Harrogate Borough Council), Richard Foster (Craven District Council), Helen Grant (Richmondshire District Council), Tim Grogan (Selby District Council), Carl Les (North Yorkshire County Council, in the Chair), Ashley Mason (City of York Council), and Peter Wilkinson (Hambleton District Council).

Community Co-opted Members: Santokh Sidhu, Paula Stott.

Julia Mulligan (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner).

Officers from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner: Simon Dennis (Acting Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer), Thomas Thorp (T/Assistant Chief Executive), Caroline Blackburn (T/Assistant Chief Executive), Michael Porter (Chief Financial Officer) Tina James-McGrath (Office and Volunteer Manager).

Officers from NYCC: Suzanne Truman (NYCC Finance), Emily Brayshaw (NYCC Finance), Diane Parsons (Panel Secretariat), Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, NYCC).

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

451. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Carl Maw.

452. Minutes of the meeting held on 19th August 2020

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th August 2020, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

453. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Keith Aspden notified that he is a Member of the LGA Fire Services Management Committee and the NJC for Fire Services.

454. Public Questions or Statements to the Panel

The Panel were advised that no questions or statements had been received.

455. Members' Questions

The Commissioner was asked how she is ensuring that community policing teams are engaging with residents and local councillors, given the current restrictions on physical meetings. The Commissioner confirmed that the police systems don't support Zoom due to security issues, but that there is a formal programme in place to review the remote and digital innovations utilised during the pandemic. The Commissioner highlighted other means through which the police are ensuring continued engagement, such as social media. It was acknowledged that coverage needs to be more focussed and the developments around Single Online Home will support this.

The Commissioner was also asked about the government funding (£291,987) allocated recently for helping to enforce the Covid-19 restrictions. North Yorkshire Police (NYP) is currently considering its proposals for use of this money. One possibility is 'Covid cars'; namely vehicles which will respond quickly to calls made by the public about possible contravention of Covid restrictions.

In response to a query regarding liaison with the Ministry of Justice around the backlog of cases awaiting trial, the Commissioner outlined that significant progress has been made through the Magistrates Courts. However, there remain concerns about the backlog at the Crown Courts. In York, the Commissioner highlighted that there may be temporary alterations which could be made at the Crown Court to help ameliorate this and it was agreed that further liaison would take place with City of York Council in respect of planning permission.

456. Fire and Rescue Annual Report 2019/20

Considered –

The Commissioner's draft Annual Report 2019/20 for Fire and Rescue.

Members raised that while the draft report read well, it was difficult to assess fully how effective performance had been against the priorities of the Fire and Rescue Plan in the absence of baseline targets. The Panel highlighted that this had been raised in 2019 when the Plan had been approved at Panel. The Commissioner advised that the Public Accountability Meetings provided the key mechanism for scrutiny against the Fire and Rescue Plan and that performance information from these meetings would be shared with the Panel.

It was also highlighted that the Panel would find it helpful to receive further information on the benefits and savings achieved through the Enable programme.

The Panel welcomed the initiatives cited in the report around working to make the service a more diverse and inclusive workforce. The Commissioner acknowledged that while positive steps have been taken, there is still some way to go to make the kind of embedded change that is required.

Members raised concerns at the significant number of incidents attended to which were recorded as 'false alarms'. The Commissioner agreed to provide further information to the Panel to help identify whether the levels in North Yorkshire are higher than elsewhere. The Commissioner outlined for Panel the work underway through the service to minimise the incidence of false alarms, which was commended by the Panel. The Commissioner advised that it is preferable for the service to attend premises where there is no one available to confirm whether there is a fire or not, rather than risk not attending to a fire; a view which was endorsed by the Panel.

The Panel requested that further information be provided, when available, regarding the Public Safety Officer pilot and also the recent evaluation of the service's engagement with young people on preventative work.

Resolved –

That the Panel:

- (a) confirms its support for the Commissioner's draft Annual Report for Fire and Rescue 2019/20;
- (b) receives further detail on the benchmarking of false alarms recorded in North Yorkshire;
- (c) receives further information on the benefits and savings realised through the Enable programme; and
- (d) receives reports on the evaluation of the Public Safety Officer pilot and the fire service's engagement with young people, when these are available.

457. Policing and Crime Annual Report 2019/20

Considered –

The Commissioner's draft Policing and Crime Annual Report 2019/20.

The Commissioner was asked about progress in relation to performance improvement in the Force Control Room (FCR). The Panel were advised that considerable progress has been made around recruitment and the FCR is almost at full complement. However, call volumes during the last two months have been at their highest in eleven years. An update report regarding the FCR has been circulated from the Commissioner to all councillors in York and North Yorkshire.

Concern was raised regarding the increase in violent crime as reported in March 2020 and the Commissioner was asked whether domestic abuse cases have increased as a result of the lockdown. The Commissioner highlighted linkages between incidences of violent crime and County Lines activity. During lockdown, a number of arrests were made in relation to County Lines in the force area. The Commissioner advised that the police are now seeing the real impact of victims of domestic abuse having been locked down with their perpetrators. Additional funding has been received for domestic abuse victim provision.

The Panel discussed the implementation of Body Worn Video with the Commissioner, who confirmed that it has been rolled out to those areas of the force who will make regular use of it. It is regularly used to help assess and resolve complaints.

Members reflected on the data capture practice which took place last year around mental health recording and some of the complexities around this at a local level, as highlighted by the Commissioner. The Panel heard that further work is being done to understand the volumes of mental health incidents that the police are dealing with in comparison with mental health partners, to help get a clearer picture of the support that policing is providing.

The Commissioner agreed to confirm the approach taken in terms of environmental impact when replacing 1000 legacy tablets at NYP. The Commissioner was also asked to share with the Panel a copy of the NYP organisational bulletin which includes learning developed through complaints handling.

Further to a discussion around the caseload dealt with by the Supporting Victims Teams, it was agreed that a report will be provided to the Panel at a future meeting to help provide better context to this service.

Resolved –

That the Panel:

- (a) confirms its support for the Commissioner's draft Policing and Crime Annual Report 2019/20;
- (b) receives further information before the next meeting regarding the disposal of 1000 legacy tablets from NYP; and
- (c) receives a report at the next meeting on the work of the Supporting Victims Team.

458. Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Delivery of the Recommendations and Funding in North Yorkshire

Considered –

The report of the Commissioner summarising actions taken by North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service following the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the national funding provided to increase inspection activity.

The Commissioner was asked how many residential buildings in North Yorkshire have cladding similar to that of Grenfell Tower. In response, it was confirmed that there are two buildings whose cladding is not the same as used at Grenfell but where further work is underway to survey and understand what needs to be done. In response to a further question about the timescale for completion of the buildings audit (February 2021), the Commissioner felt this was a sufficiently quick response and proportionate to the risks identified by the fire service.

Due to commercial sensitivities, it was agreed that a further conversation would be held on the rising of the Panel, in closed session, to outline where the 33 buildings on the audit are located and also the location of the two buildings whose cladding is being reviewed.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report and takes a further update in closed session.

459. Finance Update (to end August 2020) for Policing

Considered –

The report of the Commissioner providing a finance update on the policing budget.

Michael Porter highlighted the challenges facing the policing budget, particularly in terms of the impact of Covid-19 and reduced income. A broadly break-even position is forecasted for the budget this year. However, the difficulty will be more around tackling a deficit in Council Tax next year and thereafter. Scenario planning for next year and beyond is already underway, although Mr Porter highlighted that we are currently in a very fluid situation, which is likely to change between now and setting the precept next year.

Mr Porter was asked about the forecasted underspend on staff pay of £775,000 and whether he had plans to use any of that to offset against the borrowing requirement of £4m. Mr Porter explained that this underspend is helping to balance the budget and that

while there have been some challenges to recruitment during Covid, this is now picking up. It is not expected that the underspend will help with savings.

The Chair also thanked Mr Porter for participating in a recent meeting of the Panel's Finance sub-group.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report.

460. Finance Update (to end August 2020) for Fire and Rescue

Considered –

The report of the Commissioner providing a finance update on the fire and rescue budget.

Mr Porter highlighted a small overspend of £35,000 forecasted against the budget but that he would expect the service will be able to find ways to bring this down over the year. The NYFRS has received some Covid-19-related funding from government so the additional costs incurred from the pandemic are fully funded. There are issues around providing maintenance for some of the buildings in the estate. There will be a similar challenge to Council Tax receipts next year as highlighted against the policing budget and a similar level of scenario planning is therefore underway.

Members referred to the concerns raised in the HMICFRS inspection report for the NYFRS, which highlighted concerns around the state of repair of some of the FRS buildings. The Commissioner was asked what impact the delay in capital spend would have on this moving forward. The Panel were advised that a comprehensive IRMP process is underway, whereby risks and resources in North Yorkshire are fully assessed. The Panel expressed that it is keen to be involved in this process. The Commissioner informed Panel that the modelling will be done prior to the Commissioner elections in May 2021, ready for public consultation, and that the concerns raised will be considered as part of this process.

Mr Porter also highlighted to Panel that there will be a challenge to the Commissioner in forming up a plan for next year's precept in good time as it's expected that there will be a lot of information that would normally inform planning all coming in at the same time but with little advance knowledge. Absorbing and planning around this may impact on what is available for Panel in the New Year. He advised that one solution might be to look at a short-term plan to get both services through the next year, in order to give more time to develop a solution for the medium term.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report.

461. Complaints and Recognition Service

Considered –

The report of the Commissioner updating on the progress of the new Complaints and Recognition Service, based at the OPFCC.

Tom Thorp outlined the progress of the service since March 2020 and the volumes of complaints handled. Anticipated demand fell far short of the actual demand in this time, largely due to Covid-19. The team has also managed to service recover 87% of all cases. This means many complainants are getting an issue resolved without the need for it to go on to Professional Standards at NYP. Feedback from the public using the service has been good and a customer satisfaction survey will be conducted later in the year. A formal

Gateway review has been undertaken and the key points from that were shared in the Panel report.

Whilst there was a lot of media coverage during lockdown which focussed on public dissatisfaction with NYP's handling of enforcement of the pandemic restrictions, the Panel were advised that NYP also received its highest rate of compliments in the last 5 years.

It was noted that the service will be including a piece within an organisational bulletin at NYP to highlight some of the learning. Panel asked to be provided with a copy example and it was identified that an article will be produced in May/June 2021 and shared.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report.

462. Work Programme and Panel Meeting Dates for 2021/22

Considered –

The report of the Panel Secretariat, proposing a schedule of meeting dates for 2021/22 and a programme of work for the Panel.

Members were invited to agree the proposed schedule of dates for 2021/22 and to agree to meet remotely, at least until the end of the financial year.

Members requested that a standing item on the response to the Covid-19 pandemic by both services remain on the agenda, at least through the winter period.

Resolved –

That the Panel:

- (a) agrees the proposed schedule of meetings for 2021/22;
- (b) agrees to meet remotely until the end of the 2020/21 financial year, then review; and
- (c) agrees to include a standing item on Covid-19 response until the end of the financial year.

463. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman should, by reason of special circumstances, be considered as a matter of urgency.

The Chair notified that an item of business had been proposed by the OPFCC and invited Tom Thorp to speak to it.

The Panel were reminded that compliance rates for FoIA request handling across both the OPFCC and NYP dipped significantly last year and that as a result both were being monitored by the ICO at the beginning of this year. Mr Thorp notified that the OPFCC has now been removed from the ICO monitoring list and that while NYP are still on that list, significant improvements have been made and they have managed to considerably reduce their backlog of cases.

A substantive report on this issue is scheduled to come to Panel in January 2021.

At this point, the Chair thanked all present for their attendance and brought the public meeting to a close, inviting those who wished to remain for the closed session update from the Commissioner in respect of Item 8 to do so.

The public meeting concluded at 12:16pm.

DP

DRAFT