

North Yorkshire County Council

Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 6 February 2020, commencing at 10:30am in the Grand Meeting Room at 1 Racecourse Lane, Northallerton.

Present:-

Councillors: Keith Aspden (City of York Council), Michael Chambers MBE (Harrogate Borough Council), Liz Colling (Scarborough 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), Tracie Middleton (Ryedale District Council) and Peter Wilkinson (Hambleton District Council).

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

Chief Constable Lisa Winward (North Yorkshire Police)

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), Sharon Caddell (T/Assistant Chief Executive), Michael Porter (Chief Financial Officer), Will Naylor (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner), Rena Brown (Head of Commissioning and Partnerships).

Officers from NYCC: Barry Khan (Assistant Chief Executive, Legal and Democratic Services), Diane Parsons (Panel Secretariat).

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

426. Apologies

There were no apologies to note.

The Chair advised that the Panel would retire into closed session after consideration of Items 9(b) and 9(c) on the agenda.

427. Minutes of the meeting on 16th January 2020

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th January 2020, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

428. 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.

429. Public Questions or Statements to the Panel

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

430. Members' Questions

No questions were posed by the Panel members under this item.

431. Progress on Issues Raised by the Panel

Considered –

The report of the Panel Secretariat on progress against issues raised by the Panel either at or following the previous meeting.

The Commissioner's office had, prior to the meeting, agreed to provide the Panel with further information regarding the Commissioner's public survey on the use of Taser and on the use of stop and search. Sharon Caddell confirmed that this could be provided by 4th March 2020.

However, further to an update provided by the Chief Constable regarding the Taser survey, the Chair agreed that no further update on that matter needed to be provided to the Panel at this juncture. The key points raised through the Panel's discussion with the Chief Constable on the Taser survey included:

- A strategic threat and risk assessment has to be undertaken to identify the numbers of Taser permissible in a force area;
- More detailed work is being done to identify what this means for the North Yorkshire area;
- An officer will carry a Taser where it is identified this is needed following the assessment. Officers have to be specially trained.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report and verbal update provided.

432. Force Control Room performance update

Considered –

The report of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, providing a biannual update on the performance of the Force Control Room (FCR) in respect of handling of 999 and 101 non-emergency calls.

Further to the analysis provided on 'nuisance calls' to the FCR, Panel were advised that calls of this nature don't unduly impact on FCR performance. There are few prosecutions as the caller will often have an underlying health issue. Work is done regularly to reinforce in wider communications about what the service is there for.

Members noted the challenge for the force in terms of attrition of trained FCR officers to other policing roles, but also queried why on this basis there couldn't be tighter planning around recruitment. The Chief Constable advised that officers in the FCR only need to give 28 days' notice but it takes six months to train someone to be fully deployable once all handling. The Chief Constable was asked whether the staff notice period could be increased to say three months, to which the Panel were advised that this is something she would like to explore further.

Further to discussions on the report provided, it was agreed that further analysis would be provided to the Panel on:

- the reasons for the longer call waiting times for 101 in September and October 2019, where the demand had seen a decrease on previous months;
- numbers of staff taking calls in the FCR at peak times and what the full lengths of calls handled at those points were (i.e. look at linear correlation between staff available, volumes handled and length of time);
- what the longest waiting time was for 999/101; and
- how many calls had a wait time of over 10 minutes for the 101 service.

The Commissioner outlined plans for introducing the Single Online Home in 2021 as an alternative method for contacting the police in North Yorkshire.

The Chair advised that the Panel will continue to keep these biannual updates on the forward work programme.

Resolved –

(a) That the Panel notes the report; and

(b) That further analysis will be provided to the Panel around:

- the reasons for the longer call waiting times for 101 in September and October 2019;
- numbers of staff taking calls in the FCR at peak times and what the full lengths of calls handled at those points were;
- what the longest waiting time was for 999/101; and
- how many calls had a wait time of over 10 minutes for the 101 service.

433. Drug Crime in North Yorkshire

Considered –

The report of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner updating the Panel on progress made since September 2019 in tackling drug crime and 'County Lines' in North Yorkshire.

Members asked about the focus on smaller towns and villages and also how the public can be reassured that there will be no reprisals if they provide intelligence. The Commissioner and Chief Constable acknowledged the importance of community policing, community access to PCSOs, as well as early intervention and prevention work. The need for easy-to-use mechanisms for reporting, such as What'sApp, was also discussed.

The Commissioner was specifically asked about the reported 1404 arrests for drug offences in the last year and how many of these arrests led to a conviction. Additionally, the Commissioner was asked how many of the 27 victims of cuckooing were supported and those offenders convicted. It was agreed that further information will be provided to the Panel.

A Member asked about the gap in understanding the true nature of demand for drugs in North Yorkshire and what is being done to remedy this. A major piece of work is currently under consideration to better understand demand. The Commissioner advised that social media is increasingly being used to buy and sell drugs and that she is keen to learn from other areas around how this impacts on demand. The Commissioner felt that all partners, including local councils, could work together better to understand the true extent of the problem. The Commissioner was asked whether more could be done by police going into schools to help educate and encourage intelligence to be provided. The Commissioner advised that research shows that this is not as effective as young people providing the advocacy themselves, such as via the Youth Commission.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Panel notes the report; and
- (b) That further information will be provided on the convictions secured for drug offences and support to victims of cuckooing.

434. Panel Scrutiny of the Commissioner's Precept Proposals 2020/21

Considered –

The report of the Panel Secretariat outlining the statutory provisions for the Panel's scrutiny of the Commissioner's Council Tax precept proposals.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report.

435. Fire and Rescue Service Precept Proposal 2020/21

Considered –

The report of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner setting out her proposal for the Council Tax precept for fire and rescue for 2020/21.

Michael Porter outlined the Commissioner's proposal to set the fire and rescue element of the Council Tax precept at £72.69 for 2020/21, which represents a 1.99% increase (or £1.42) over the 2019/20 level for a Band D property.

The Panel noted that the proposal put forward achieves a balanced budget with no unfunded shortfall for 2020/21. Mr Porter highlighted that the Transform 2020 programme and review of watch managers have provided the capacity to balance the budget. However, the national settlement and the curtailing of the precept limit does not provide the ability to invest in the service and this will present a challenge in the next few years. Mr Porter was asked about the capital spending plan and reliance on external borrowing. He advised that in trying to find alternative ways to secure capital investment for any future needs in a way that is more sustainable, he has started to build up a capital reserve.

Members expressed concerns regarding the steep increases to employer contributions to pensions in the next few years and the vulnerability implicit in the service's reliance on future government grants to fill any resulting shortfall.

The Commissioner emphasised that there will be a formal review of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) in the next 12 months, including a public consultation, and that no significant changes can be made to the service until this piece of work has been done. However, if the government funding situation does not improve then the service will need to change.

Resolved –

That the Panel supports the Commissioner's proposal to set the fire and rescue element of the Council Tax precept at £72.69 for 2020/21 (Band D property).

436. Policing Precept Proposal 2020/21

Considered –

The report of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner setting out her proposal for the Council Tax precept for policing for 2020/21.

The Commissioner presented a proposal to the Panel to set the policing element of the Council Tax precept for 2020/21 at £265.77, which represents an increase of £10 (or 3.91%) over the 2019/20 level for a Band D property.

The Panel noted the particular funding pressures on the policing budget for 2020/21. These include the estimated £4.9m to deliver the recruitment of 58 additional police officers under Operation Uplift, where a grant of £1,635k is being provided centrally to potentially cover off all costs associated with the delivery of this recruitment. Further to discussion with the Panel, Mr Porter clarified that the national funding and the precept proposed will be needed to ensure that the national officer uplift programme is successfully implemented.

Members expressed concern at the reported £600,000 underspend from the 2018/19 precept uplift, particularly as it had been projected last year that this would be in the region of £210,000. The Commissioner explained that the funding has been fully allocated to the recruitment by the Chief Constable of police officers and PCSOs for 'Reinforcing the Front Line', as planned, but that the funding will be retained by the Commissioner until these posts have been fully deployed. The reason for the 'underspend' has been the lag in deployment following training for the new officers.

Members also challenged around whether it may be more prudent to retain any 'underspend' from 2019/20 for the incoming Commissioner to direct towards their priorities, rather than look to quickly spend this money now. The Commissioner outlined a number of prevention and early intervention projects which she felt were critically in need of this funding in order to tackle such issues as a rise in domestic abuse victims needing support.

The Chair invited all parties, other than Panel Members and officers supporting the Panel, to leave and the Panel went into closed session.

After a period of time of discussion, the Panel resolved that it would agree the Commissioner's policing precept proposal for 2020/21. The Chair advised that the Panel's significant concerns around the underspend from last year's uplift and its deployment had, as a consequence, led the Panel to again consider exercising its power of veto in relation to the 2020/21 policing precept proposal. However, a majority view of this was not held across the Panel and the Panel also recognised the critical need for funding to go into the police force in 2020/21. The statutory report from the Panel will reflect these concerns.

The Chair wished to note the legal basis for the Panel retiring into closed session. Under Schedule 12(a) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Panel is given discretion to hold discussions in confidential session where this pertains to the financial affairs of an organisation.

The Chair agreed that the Panel would like to take further presentation from the attending NYP officers and staff regarding the projects to be funded from the precept raised in 2020/21 (outlined at Appendix 8 in the paperwork). This would best be done on the rising of the formal Panel meeting.

Resolved –

That the Panel approves the Commissioner's proposal to set the policing element of Council Tax for 2020/21 at £265.77 for a Band D property.

437. Recruitment of Independent Co-opted Members to the Panel

Considered –

The report of the Panel Secretariat, recommending a process for selecting two Independent Co-opted members of the Panel to be approved by full Panel in October 2020.

Councillors Les, Wilkinson, Mason, Grant, Grogan and Middleton agreed to form a sub-group to the Panel to oversee the recruitment and selection process. Councillor Aspden agreed to assume responsibility for this from Councillor Mason after City of York's annual council meeting in May 2020.

Resolved –

- (a) That a Task Group is formed to oversee the recruitment and selection of the Panel's two Independent Co-opted members; and
- (b) That this process will be concluded no later than the end of September 2020 in order for recommendations to be considered at the October 2020 Panel meeting.

438. Any Other Urgent Business

No urgent business was notified to the Chair.

The Chair highlighted that Councillor Mason would be standing down from the Panel in May 2020 and on behalf of the Panel he wished Councillor Mason well and thanked him for his contribution.

The Chair also highlighted that this would be the last formal meeting of the Panel with the Commissioner and on behalf of the Panel wished the Commissioner well in her future endeavours.

The meeting concluded at 1:13pm.

DP