

# North Yorkshire County Council

## North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Thursday, 22nd July, 2021 commencing at 10.30 am.

Councillors Carl Les (North Yorkshire County Council) in the Chair; Keith Aspden (City of York Council), Peter Wilkinson (Hambleton District Council), Lindsay Burr (Ryedale District Council), Mike Chambers (Harrogate Borough Council), Tim Grogan (Selby District Council), Carl Maw (Scarborough Borough Council), Patrick Mulligan (Craven District Council) and Darryl Smalley (City of York Council).

Community Co-opted Members: Paula Stott.

In attendance: Jonathan Foster (North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service).

Officers from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner: Philip Allott (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire), Caroline Blackburn (Asst Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer), Michael Porter (Chief Financial Officer), Tom Thorp (Asst Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer) and Simon Dennis (Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer).

Officers present: Diane Parsons (Principal Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Helen Grant (Richmondshire District Council) and Santokh Sidhu (Independent Co-opted Member).

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### Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

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#### 518 Election of Panel Chair

The Secretariat officer opened the meeting by reminding all present of the decision-making arrangements for the meeting. Following the expiry of the legislation permitting remote committee meetings in May 2021), the County Council resolved at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021 that in light of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic circumstances, remote live-broadcast committee meetings should continue, with any formal decision required being taken by the Chief Executive Officer under his emergency decision-making powers and after consultation with other officers and Members as appropriate and after taking into account any views of the relevant Committee Members. As the Panel is constituted as a committee of the council, those present were reminded that the meeting was as such being held informally and any formal decisions required would be taken by the Chief Executive Officer under the terms advised.

The Secretariat officer then proceeded to seek nominations and seconds for the election of Panel Chair.

**Resolved – that the following be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration under his emergency delegated powers:-**

That Councillor Carl Les be elected to serve as Chair until July 2022.

#### 519 Welcome and apologies

**Councillor Carl Les in the Chair.**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting; in particular the newly-elected Commissioner, Philip Allott, and the three new Members to the Panel (Councillors Smalley, Mulligan and Burr).

Apologies were noted from Santokh Sidhu and Councillor Helen Grant.

**520 Minutes of the Panel Meeting held on 24th March 2021**

**Resolved – that the following be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration under his emergency delegated powers:-**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**521 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th March 2021**

No matters arising were notified to the meeting.

**522 Election of Vice Chairs to the Panel**

**Resolved – that the following be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration under his emergency delegated powers:-**

That Councillor Peter Wilkinson and Councillor Keith Aspden be elected as Vice Chairs to serve until July 2022.

**523 Declarations of Interest**

*[Councillor Burr joined the meeting].*

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

**524 Consideration of the Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved –**

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Item 10 on the grounds that this involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph specified in column 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1971 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006.

**525 Public Questions or Statements to the Panel**

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

**526 Confirmation Hearing**

**527 Guidance for the Confirmation Hearing**

Considered –

The guidance note from the Panel Secretariat outlining the role and process for the Panel in conducting the confirmation hearing.

**Resolved –**

That the Panel notes the guidance provided.

**528 Supporting information from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

Considered –

The report of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner setting out details of the recruitment process conducted for Interim Chief Fire Officer and notifying the Panel of the preferred appointee, Mr Jonathan Foster.

**Resolved –**

That the Panel notes the report provided.

**529 Personal statement from the preferred appointee**

Considered –

The personal statement provided by the preferred candidate for Interim Chief Fire Officer, Mr Jonathan Foster.

The Chair thanked Mr Foster for providing his personal statement.

The Panel subsequently asked a number of questions of Mr Foster in order to be reassured that the candidate would meet the standards required for the role as outlined by the Commissioner.

**Question 1: Councillor Tim Grogan asked Mr Foster what he saw as being the key priorities for the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service over the next 12 months.**

Mr Foster identified the delivery of the risk and resource model as the key priority for the service. He also cited the on-call element of the fire service as needing some improvements and that this will continue to be a large piece of work. Financial challenges will continue to be a factor but Mr Foster felt there are opportunities to make the service more efficient by re-aligning existing resources into higher priority areas. Improving diversity in the service will also be a high priority over the next 12 months and beyond.

**Question 2: Councillor Mike Chambers asked Mr Foster if he could provide an example of where he has had to give advice to a senior leader which may have been contrary to his own view, and how he dealt with this.**

In response, Mr Foster referred to the differing views at play with senior officials around introduction of the Tactical Response Vehicles (TRVs) and around public

engagement on the issue. Primarily, he referred to the importance of maintaining communication with one another, understanding differences of opinion, being prepared to listen and ultimately arriving at an amicable solution.

**Question 3: Councillor Patrick Mulligan asked Mr Foster how he will tackle the need to make urgent improvements to large sections of the fire estate in view of the challenging budget situation.**

Mr Foster underlined the importance of making the estate fit for a diverse workforce and that this will be a financial priority for the service. He also underlined the need to engage effectively with staff, the public and the Commissioner to help people better understand the challenges the service has.

**Question 4: Paula Stott asked Mr Foster what he has done in the past to ensure service values and core code of ethics has been embedded and what he intends to do in the next 12 months on this.**

The service has run taster days for recruitment exercises, targeted particularly at under-represented groups. An action plan is in place to deliver workshops and training on equality diversity and inclusion, to ensure that the values are fully embedded. Appropriate marketing of the service will then be needed going forward, particularly for on-call recruitment programmes.

**Question 5: Councillor Keith Aspden asked Mr Foster how he would ensure that the views of a wide range of stakeholders are properly considered in relation to the risk and resource model, and that there is appropriate engagement with staff, officers and unions.**

Mr Foster referred to a staff engagement programme underway and sought to reassure the Panel that engagement will be opened out to unions and the public.

**Question 6: Councillor Carl Maw asked Mr Foster how he will ensure an appropriate balance between meeting the needs of both rural and urban areas across such a large geography.**

Mr Foster referred, in response, to prevention being key and that there will be opportunities through the new risk and resource model to re-align resources. Some areas will need a greater focus on prevention in order to bolster the response service available.

**Question 7: Councillor Lindsay Burr asked Mr Foster how he would ensure greater diversity in recruitment, challenge traditional stereotypes about the firefighter role and reach out to under-represented groups.**

Mr Foster highlighted the need for ongoing internal cultural change in the service, getting the workforce to understand the benefits of diversity; not just around gender diversity. A range of approaches will be needed over time. Mr Foster also highlighted that 15 new recruits have just been employed, 5 of which were women, and that these recruits came from a wide range of backgrounds.

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

**Resolved – that the following be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration under his emergency delegated powers:-**

On the basis of the information provided by the Commissioner, the discussions held in the confirmation hearing and examination of the evidence in both the public meeting and closed session, the Panel is pleased to recommend the appointment of Mr Jonathan Foster as Interim Chief Fire Officer.

**531 Members' Questions**

In response to a question regarding how best to tackle wildlife crime in the county, the Commissioner highlighted his recent engagement with the Rural Task Force on this issue and underlined that it is the Commissioner's role to draw the public's attention to the fact that you can be prosecuted for this type of crime. This will assist in helping to prevent further incidents.

A supplementary point was made by a Member around securing prosecutions for wildlife crime and that it was felt that fly-tipping should be treated more seriously at the magistrates courts. Reference was made in this context to the installation of ANPR cameras in Selby. The Commissioner concurred that he is keen to see more successful prosecutions for wildlife crimes and agreed also that he would raise the concerns regarding fly-tipping with the police. The Panel were advised that a mobile ANPR unit has been purchased with Safer Streets funding, which will assist with cross-border crime, including fly-tipping and hare coursing.

The Commissioner was asked whether he supported an increase in third-party reporting places for hate crime in York. In response, he outlined that he is keen to work collaboratively and bring on more people as third parties to contribute to the process but that education – for example engagement with schools – will also be key.

**532 Draft Annual Report for Policing and Crime 2020/21**

Considered –

The Commissioner's draft Policing and Crime Annual Report 2020/21.

Following an introduction to the report by the Commissioner, Members raised a number of observations and questions generated by the content of the draft. The key discussion points are summarised as follows:

- Members commended the work undertaken in partnership between the Commissioner, Police, local councils and others in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and would like to see this close working continuing for the benefit of communities;
- The Panel continues to have concern regarding the prevalence of drug crime, not only County Lines but also pervasive recreational drugs. This concern is shared by the Commissioner and the Panel was advised that further resources will be allocated centrally in the autumn.
- Members commended the introduction of a hate crime co-ordinator role within the force and the Commissioner agreed to provide a more comprehensive report for Panel on this role and how hate crime is being tackled.
- The Panel would welcome more hard data in future annual reports to enable

a clearer assessment of progress. The Panel also suggested that biannual updates are taken on how the Commissioner feels progress is being made against the key objectives of the Police and Crime Plan.

- Members underlined the importance of visible community policing and the role played by PCSOs.

**Resolved - that the following be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration under his emergency delegated powers:-**

That the Panel recommends that the draft Policing and Crime Annual Report 2020/21 be approved.

### **533 Draft Annual Report for Fire and Rescue 2020/21**

Considered –

The Commissioner's draft Fire and Rescue Annual Report 2020/21.

Following an introduction to the report by the Commissioner, Members raised a number of observations and questions generated by the content of the draft. The key discussion points are summarised as follows:

- Members welcomed the Commissioner's plans to modernise the estate to help make the service more welcoming as an employer to a diverse range of people, especially to female firefighters.
- The Panel and Commissioner share concern at the financial position for the service and the unsustainability of continuing to rely on drawing from reserves. The Panel expressed support for any dialogue with central government to help influence greater precept flexibility.
- Similarly to the policing annual report, Members requested that more data (objectives) be introduced into the annual reports in future to enable a clearer assessment of progress.
- Members welcomed the Commissioner's views around prevention and ensuring continued support for the most vulnerable in our communities; including through the expansion of the Public Safety Officer programme.

**Resolved - that the following be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration under his emergency delegated powers:-**

That the Panel recommends that the draft Fire and Rescue Annual Report 2020/21 be approved.

### **534 Memorandum of Understanding between the Panel and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

Considered –

The verbal update by the Chair regarding progress on the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Panel and the Commissioner.

The Chair welcomed efforts to develop this document and emphasised that the Panel would like it to be as light-touch and flexible an agreement as possible. It is not intended to be a contract between the parties. A working group of key Members and officers has been formed and will report back to the next Panel.

**Resolved –**

That the Panel note the update provided.

**535 Work Programme**

Considered –

The report by the Panel Secretariat outlining a draft programme of work for the Panel.

Members requested that the following items be scheduled:

- An update from the Commissioner in three to six months to review how he feels progress is moving around the priorities and objectives discussed in the draft Annual Reports (i.e. Police and Crime Plan/Fire and Rescue Plan).
- An update from the Commissioner on community and neighbourhood policing.

It was also agreed that arrangements will be progressed for an in-person Panel meeting at Hambleton District Council on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

**Resolved –**

That the Panel notes the report provided.

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

The Panel were advised that no urgent business had been notified to the Chair.

The meeting concluded at 12.15 pm.

DP.