

North Yorkshire Council

North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Minutes of the meeting held in the Hudson Room at City of York Council's West Offices on Thursday, 12th October, 2023, commencing at 10.30 am.

Councillors Carl Les (North Yorkshire Council) in the Chair; Chris Aldred (North Yorkshire Council), Lindsay Burr MBE (North Yorkshire Council), Tim Grogan (North Yorkshire Council), Emilie Knight (City of York Council), Rich Maw (North Yorkshire Council), Danny Myers (City of York Council), Michael Pavlovic (City of York Council), Malcolm Taylor (North Yorkshire Council, substituting for Cllr Moorhouse) and Peter Wilkinson (North Yorkshire Council).

Community Co-opted Members: Fraser Forsyth, Mags Godderidge and Martin Walker

In attendance: Jonathan Dyson (Chief Fire Officer) (North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service).

Officers from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner: Zoë Metcalfe (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire), Michael Porter (Chief Financial Officer), Simon Dennis (Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer), Tamara Pattinson (Director, Delivery and Assurance) and Amanda Wilkinson (Director of Public Confidence).

Officers present: Diane Parsons (Principal Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillor Heather Moorhouse (North Yorkshire Council).

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

692 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Councillor Moorhouse (Councillor Taylor substituting).

693 Declarations of Interest

Mags Godderidge notified that she is CEO of Survive; a charity commissioned by the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) to provide services to survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Mags also declared for transparency in relation to Item 8 that she sits on the Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategic Steering Group and the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Professional Working Group. In addition, Mags is a representative from the latter group to the VAWG Strategic Governance Board.

Martin Walker declared that he is a Trustee of IDAS, which receives funding for its work from the OPFCC.

694 Minutes of the Panel Meeting held on 20th July 2023

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th July 2023, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct

record.

695 Progress on Issues Raised by the Panel

Considered –

The progress report regarding issues raised by the Panel at previous meetings.

Martin Walker commended North Yorkshire Police for successfully piloting Project Prism in relation to the routine re-vetting of officers and which is now adopted by all other police forces.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the update report.

696 Public Questions or Statements to the Panel

A question had been received in advance of the meeting and agreed through the Chair from Councillor George Jabbour of North Yorkshire Council, as follows:

I represent the rural division of Helmsley and Sinnington in Ryedale, North Yorkshire. The lack of visible policing is nothing new and residents regularly highlight this issue.

Since my election last year, I have held regular meetings with North Yorkshire Police officers to raise the concerns of local people. I joined them in conducting community engagement activities. They also attended a public meeting in Helmsley.

As communicated to Commissioner Zoë Metcalfe when we met recently, our community is grateful for the support and engagement that we have been receiving from the dedicated team of police officers.

Following my conversations with the police, it was concluded that having a new police hub in our part of Ryedale would provide critical additional cover and reassurance for a number of communities given the gap in response times between urban centres and rural locations in North Yorkshire.

Several options were explored. I was very pleased when I was informed recently that a new police hub will be located at Kirkbymoorside Fire Station to address the threat and risk with response times to several towns and villages on the A170.

Although it is outside the Helmsley and Sinnington division, Kirkbymoorside occupies a strategic location for the various parishes that I represent as it is situated between Helmsley and Sinnington.

I am wondering when this new hub is going to be fully operational, how often will police officers be present there and what estimated impact this initiative will have on response times.

Are there similar hubs across the wider Ryedale and North Yorkshire areas that are being introduced?

It was acknowledged that the question related to operational policing rather than Panel business. The Commissioner agreed to relay the question to North Yorkshire Police to seek a response for Councillor Jabbour.

Decision-Making Process regarding the Recruitment for Chief Constable

A paper regarding the Commissioner's decision-making process for recruiting a Chief Constable was submitted to the Chair on 10th October 2023 by the Commissioner and the request made that it be considered at the meeting on 12th October 2023. By virtue of the significance of the issue and the level of public interest in this matter, the Chair accepted by reason of special circumstances that the item should be considered at the Panel meeting.

In outlining her rationale for the decision made to recruit a Chief Constable, the Commissioner highlighted that she had taken professional advice from her senior team and also consulted with a range of national stakeholders. She was not satisfied that deferring the decision to the incoming Mayor would be the right decision for the force as it would result in a delay in getting stable leadership to continue the progress against improvements already made. The Commissioner highlighted that the recruitment process will be rigorous to ensure the strongest possible field of applicants.

Panel members conveyed a range of different views on the decision, including:

- It may be a disadvantage for a new Chief Constable to be appointed now if they do not know who will be Mayor or what the incoming Mayoral priorities will be;
- A Chief Constable has to be independent and strong so if they struggle to get on with an elected official then they may not be a good fit for the job anyway.
- Having a Deputy Chief Constable 'act up' for a lengthy period is not the best solution for the area and this is what would result from awaiting the Mayor's appointment to the role.
- Are there risks inherent to the strength of the field of candidates coming forward if recruiting during a period of change?

In response, the Commissioner emphasised that if the decision awaits the election of Mayor then the Deputy Chief Constable is compelled to step up for a prolonged period, which has knock-on effects on the senior team beneath and leaves gaps. The Commissioner felt this presented risks in view of the level of change and improvement underway and underlined that stakeholders such as the College of Policing and HMICFRS did not see a problem with recruiting at a time of change.

A recommendation was proposed – and seconded - that the Commissioner considers pausing the recruitment process until after the Mayoral election and that under Section 29 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (the PRSRA), the Commissioner is asked to respond formally to this recommendation in writing.

A named vote was requested by a Panel member on this recommendation. A unanimous show of hands confirmed support for a named vote. The results of the vote were as follows:

Cllr Chris Aldred	Against
Cllr Lindsay Burr	For
Cllr Tim Grogan	For
Cllr Emilie Knight	Against
Cllr Carl Les	For
Cllr Rich Maw	For
Cllr Danny Myers	For
Cllr Michael Pavlovic	For
Cllr Malcolm Taylor	For
Cllr Peter Wilkinson	For

Fraser Forsyth	For
Mags Godderidge	Against
Martin Walker	Against

There were no abstentions.

As such the recommendation was carried with nine votes in favour and four against.

Resolved –

That the Panel:

- (a) Recommends that the Commissioner pauses the recruitment process for appointment of a Chief Constable, until after the Mayoral election has taken place;
- (b) Requests a written response to their recommendation to the Commissioner, under s29 of the PRSRA.

698 Members' Questions - Other Matters

The Commissioner was asked what reassurances she could give regarding the quality of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in North Yorkshire, following national reporting around quality concerns. In response, the Commissioner spoke in detail to the rigorous testing and cleaning protocols in place at the SARC to ensure it is forensically clean and that staff are provided with appropriate training and undertake relevant qualifications to ensure the highest standards.

Members asked about the approach towards handling of those businesses who are 'repeat offenders' in terms of callouts for automatic fire alarms, to identify whether the potential for applying a charge is an effective sanction or not. The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged that for some it will be cheaper to pay the charge but that education is the focus. It was agreed that data would be provided to the Panel around how many businesses have four or more false automatic alarm call-outs and are charged.

The Commissioner was asked whether she'd had opportunity to review North Yorkshire Police's response to the Greenpeace protest on the roof of the Prime Minister's house. The Commissioner clarified that Homeland Security have responsibility for security for the Prime Minister, not North Yorkshire Police, however she was satisfied that the response from the Force Control Room had been swift and officers had dealt with the situation effectively. The Home Office and Homeland Security had also been content with the response provided.

Members also commended the new Community Messaging service from North Yorkshire Police.

699 "Right Care, Right Person" Update

Considered –

The briefing from the Commissioner on the implementation of the "Right Care, Right Person" model in North Yorkshire.

The Commissioner sought to emphasise that where there is a need for mental health/welfare checks to be undertaken that this is a health commissioning gap in

service and not a police commissioning gap. A multi-agency panel including OPFCC representation meets monthly to discuss cases and concerns, to ensure that processes are monitored and honed further.

Members acknowledged the need to ensure resources are diverted to tackling key policing priorities and that a police officer isn't always the most appropriate person to check on a vulnerable individual. However, concerns were reiterated from the Panel around how clients linked in to third sector agencies are being served within this model and the process for triage and support for such individuals when welfare calls come in to the Force Control Room (FCR). The Commissioner offered to provide further information to support that appropriate triage is happening.

The Chair requested that a further report be brought to Panel in due course in this matter.

Resolved –

That the Panel:

- (a) Notes the briefing provided;
- (b) Receives further data and information for the next meeting to support that appropriate triaging of welfare calls from the Force Control Room is taking place;
- (c) Revisits progress on implementation of the Right Care, Right Person model in a year's time.

700

Updates on Inspection, Risk and Resource Model Implementation and Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity.

Considered –

The composite report from the Commissioner regarding the fire and rescue service, updating the Panel on progress in relation to the HMICFRS inspections, implementation of the Risk and Resource Model (RRM) and work to enhance equality, diversity and inclusivity.

The Commissioner highlighted that positive feedback had been received from HMICFRS following a re-visit but that the report will be confidential until later this month. Implementation of the RRM at Huntington station has moved forward, with wholtime staff relocation to be completed by the end of November. A number of elements have been progressed around equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) including a Framework for Change project in collaboration with Huddersfield University.

Concerns were raised by the Panel that North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (NYFRS) had the slowest average response time nationally last year at 13 minutes and 9 seconds; almost 90 seconds longer than the previous year and more than two minutes slower than in 2012. The concern raised was that this represents a downward trend and that the RRM may adversely impact this further. The Panel has been awaiting data to help understand the impact of the RRM on Huntington station. By way of response, the Chief Fire Officer spoke to the rurality of the area and lack of stations, proportionally, compared to other areas, thereby affecting response times. Improvements are being made around NYFRS data capture to better support the RRM in 2025. The Commissioner agreed with the view expressed that additional funding into the NYFRS would be of benefit and she has again written to the Minister on this point.

The Chief Fire Officer offered a briefing on the context to the RRM for Panel members if helpful as it was felt that there may be misconceptions around the risk modelling and how this had been developed.

The Commissioner was asked whether she feels confident that the new independent reporting line for the NYFRS will be advertised widely enough. By way of response, the Commissioner outlined the various ways – in addition to the reporting line - that staff can report concerns.

Resolved –

That the Panel:

- (a) Notes the report provided; and
- (b) Receives a further briefing around the Risk and Resource Model in due course, either as part of a Panel meeting or during a separate seminar opportunity.

At this point in the meeting (11:55am), the Chair requested that the meeting be formally adjourned to enable a short comfort break.

701 Strategy to Address Violence Against Women and Girls - Annual Update to Panel

The meeting re-convened at 12:08pm.

Considered –

The Commissioner's report regarding progress against the Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

The Commissioner outlined some of the services and interventions which are commissioned through her office. It was highlighted that demand continues to grow for specialist support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence but that there had also been a significant increase in those accessing these services reporting positive outcomes. Joint working with partners has been effective.

The Panel highlighted that there is a much greater number of referrals for specialist support than the published figure and the Commissioner was asked about how this intelligence on the ground is being adequately picked up. It was outlined to the Panel that the Commissioner is mindful of longer term demand and wanting victims to come forward but also being conscious of service capacity to deal with this increase. The office is looking at long-term funding strategies. In terms of intelligence, the office is using a range of methods such as surveys, working with commissioned providers and the Strategic Sexual Violence Group.

The Commissioner was asked if she could share the North Yorkshire results from the recent Operation Soteria Bluestone survey of victims/survivors of sexual violence and what is being done to address any shortcomings. The Commissioner reported that the North Yorkshire findings were broadly across the national average and most victims felt treated with dignity and respect by police officers. Satisfaction does fall off over a longer period where cases take longer to move through the criminal justice system. North Yorkshire Police (NYP) has not yet adopted the findings as they are awaiting to receive a self-assessment package shortly and a project team will then implement over the following 12 months.

The Panel asked the Commissioner about what is being done to encourage people to come forward and report domestic abuse and sexual violence and how intelligence is being captured within the police system. By way of response, the Panel was advised of the partnership mechanisms in place, in addition to Crimestoppers, which assist the police in reviewing trends of perpetrating behaviour and linking up with relevant commissioned services.

The Commissioner was asked how she will assess public trust and confidence in the police, in addition to questions regarding action to review and scrutinise the numbers of reported rapes going to prosecution. The Panel were advised that the Commissioner evaluates trust and confidence through her rolling public survey and has also done an anonymous survey about experiences. In terms of rape prosecutions, the file quality for the CPS has improved and this has cut down on the time victims must wait to get to prosecution. Additionally, there are two scrutiny panels which focus on domestic abuse and rape/sexual offences cases that haven't been put forward to the CPS, particularly wanting to look at where the victim has withdrawn from the process and learning is shared with NYP.

The Panel asked about perpetrator programmes and how these might target individuals who aren't referred to the courts. Current provision is available to those willing to engage voluntarily so the Commissioner's office are looking at a national programme whereby police have the power to offer an out of court disposal for perpetrators of lower risk if they complete a perpetrator programme.

Members were also keen to ask the Commissioner about what support is in place for adult survivors of child sexual abuse. The Commissioner acknowledged that there is a commitment to do more consultation around this in the coming months.

In response to a Panel question about the timeframe for completion of the new SARC in York, the Commissioner outlined the challenges that had arisen to progress but that she expects the work will start by Christmas. It was agreed that Panel members may visit the SARC prior to opening if useful.

NYP were commended by the Panel for their work on developing a system for domestic violence molestation orders, which now means that the police are able to more quickly access information about such Orders where a woman reports that one is in place.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the annual progress report provided.

702 Tackling Hate Crime in North Yorkshire and York

Considered –

The Commissioner's annual report on how effectively hate crime is being tackled in North Yorkshire and York.

The Chair thanked NYP for the recent informal briefing provided to Panel members on hate crime, as this had been very informative.

The Commissioner outlined the key issues from the report, including highlighting that most hate crimes occur within the night-time economy and that Restorative Solutions have been commissioned to address and challenge offending behaviour.

Members asked the Commissioner whether she felt that the hate crime unit is

sufficiently staffed and resourced given its prioritisation as an issue. The Commissioner acknowledged that hate crime is unfortunately a 'growth area' and that the Panel can expect to see that come through the NYP organisational re-design.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report provided.

703 Work Programme

Considered –

The report of the Panel Secretariat outlining the Panel's programme of work.

It was agreed that work will continue with the Commissioner's office to identify a suitable date for a confirmation hearing for Chief Constable.

The Panel agreed to formally postpone the scheduled meeting date in April 2024, to avoid the pre-election restrictions.

Resolved –

That the Panel agrees the outline work programme.

704 Any other items

Having received notice prior to the meeting, the Chair invited Martin Walker to update the Panel on his recent familiarisation meeting with the Rural Task Force. Martin outlined how they discussed a range of challenges to detection and prosecution, including the sometimes violent (and armed) nature of wildlife crime perpetrators and the fact that witnesses can be too afraid to come forward. The discussion also raised the issue of acquisitive crime in rural areas, often involving high-value remote control tractor equipment. Martin thanked the Task Force and commended other Panel members to take up this opportunity.

705 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday, 11th January 2024 at 10:30am – County Hall, Northallerton.

The meeting concluded at 12:54pm.
DP.