

North Yorkshire County Council

North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Thursday, 14th January, 2021 commencing at 10.30 am.

Councillor Peter Wilkinson (Hambleton District Council) in the Chair, plus Councillors Keith Aspden (City of York Council), Mike Chambers (Harrogate Borough Council), Richard Foster (Craven District Council), Helen Grant (Richmondshire District Council), Tim Grogan (Selby District Council), Carl Les (North Yorkshire County Council), Ashley Mason (City of York Council), Carl Maw (Scarborough Borough Council)

Community Co-opted Members: Paula Stott.

Julia Mulligan (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner)

Officers from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner: Caroline Blackburn and Michael Porter.

Officers from NYCC: Diane Parsons and Emily Brayshaw.

Other Attendees: Superintendent Mike Walker (North Yorkshire Police); Phil Whild (North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

464 Welcome and apologies

Due to technical difficulties experienced by Councillor Carl Les, the Chair was taken by Councillor Peter Wilkinson.

Apologies were noted from Santokh Sidhu and from Councillor Eric Hope, the Panel's new Member for Ryedale District Council.

465 Minutes of the Panel Meeting held on 15th October 2020

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th October 2020, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

466 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th October 2020

No matters arising were notified.

467 Declarations of Interest

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

468 Public Questions or Statements to the Panel

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

469 Progress on Issues Raised by the Panel

Considered –

The report from the Panel Secretariat updating Panel on the progress made against issues raised at previous Panel meetings.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report.

470 Members' Questions

The Commissioner was asked what provision is being made for lateral flow testing of Covid-19 for officers of North Yorkshire Police. It was clarified that while there is a lot of discussion nationally about testing and vaccination of officers, police officers haven't as of yet been prioritised for lateral flow testing. Supt Mike Walker highlighted the track and trace team in place within North Yorkshire Police which helps to ensure rapid action where an officer comes into contact with an individual who has tested positive for Covid.

A query was also raised regarding North Yorkshire Police's media policy, which had seen recent changes implemented to the response and level of information provided to media queries. The Commissioner agreed to review the benefits brought by the change in policy in six months' time.

Through the Commissioner, North Yorkshire Police were also thanked for the difficult work they had done in issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for breaches of Covid-19 restrictions.

471 Covid-19 Pandemic Response and Issues Presented for Policing and Fire and Rescue

Considered –

The report of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner regarding the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact presented for policing and the fire and rescue service.

The Commissioner introduced the report, highlighting in particular the work done by her team to help ensure that additional funding is brought in to support victims of domestic abuse and also to identify potential perpetrators. The Commissioner also highlighted that Covid-19 has put a spotlight on the shortcomings of the Crown Court service, in relation to providing a modern day service, referencing that there are still backlogs of cases.

Policing response

The Commissioner was commended for the funding that has been drawn into North Yorkshire to support victims of domestic abuse and was asked whether the £446k received to work with perpetrators was one-off funding or built into the base budget. The Commissioner clarified that Ministry of Justice funding is 'one-off' but that she had managed to lobby for there to be a longer timeframe within which the money could be spent as the initial stipulation was not realistic.

Members thanked the police and fire service for their ongoing partnership work and proactive planning for Christmas and New Year. Members felt it would be helpful for all communities to have a clearer understanding of what is meant by “local/locality” in terms of taking regular exercise.

Supt Mike Walker acknowledged the need for proportionality but that firm conversations have been and will be needed with any members of the public who are looking to exercise well outside of their local area. The Commissioner continues to call for clarity centrally on the term “locality”. The Commissioner also highlighted that she continues to ensure robust scrutiny of how the Fixed Penalty Notices are being issued.

In terms of returning to a tiered system, Supt Walker highlighted that a joint partner approach will be made to the NPCC with recent public health data from York to illustrate how Covid can escalate in a lower tier area surrounded by higher-level tiers where there is guidance to stay at home but where this is not enshrined in law.

[Supt Mike Walker left the meeting at 11:35am]

Fire and Rescue service response

Phil Whild updated the Panel on the work of the fire and rescue service. Adopting a risk-based model has helped to ensure protection of staff, minimise staff infections from Covid and maintain the service needed. The service has offered additional support to partners and has been involved in a range of duties such as delivering prescriptions. HMICFRS has recently inspected the FRS in relation to its response to the pandemic and the report will be published shortly.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report.

The Panel adjourned for a short comfort break at 11:55am. Phil Whild left the meeting at this point.

472 Setting the Precepts for 2021/22 for Policing and Fire and Rescue

The Panel resumed its meeting at 12:02pm.

Considered –

The report from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner outlining considerations surrounding developing the precept proposals for policing and fire and rescue for 2021/22.

The Commissioner introduced the report. Flexibility has been given to Commissioners to increase the policing precept by up to £15 although a cap has been placed on the fire and rescue service precept of just 1.99% (£5.29). A public consultation on the precepts closed on 13th January and the Commissioner outlined that there is less public enthusiasm for paying more for policing than in previous years, particularly as policing has benefited from relatively high levels of funding the last three years. There appears to be a greater appetite for funding fire and rescue but there isn't that option. The Commissioner explained that in considering the precept levels she is particularly mindful that we are in the middle of a pandemic. She is undertaking further work to understand the impact of the pandemic, especially on businesses and by engaging with the LEP.

The Commissioner asked if Panel could share thoughts from their local authorities as to how similar discussions are developing within their councils and what impact there has been on businesses. There followed a discussion with some of the Panel Members who

are also Leaders and/or Cabinet members. Many councils have not reached a final decision but are conscious of the need to strike the right balance.

Cllr Helen Grant left the meeting at 12:14pm.

The Panel will have the opportunity to meet with Michael Porter informally to review budgetary/precept information, prior to the next meeting on 5th February. Panel members were urged to attend and details will be circulated again.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report.

473 Enable: An Overview of the Programme, including Benefits and Savings

Considered –

The report of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner providing an overview of the Enable programme.

The Commissioner clarified the context for the Enable programme. The savings identified within the business case for the transfer of governance of fire and rescue have previously been reported on to Panel through the Commissioner's One Year On report, received in January 2020. The Enable programme represents the next step after this work and does not directly stem from the business case itself. It brings together the business-enabling functions of the police and fire and rescue service into one department. The Panel were advised that this is an interim update on the programme and the Commissioner is unable at this stage to pinpoint financial savings. Michael Porter advised that once the programme has moved on slightly there will be greater confidence to be able to report expected savings. At this stage, savings are more difficult to quantify but stem from the principle of achieving a common IT platform.

Members advised that it would be useful to be reminded of the financial benefits flowing from the original business case, in addition to having a better understanding of the costs associated with the transformation of the back office functions. Michael Porter agreed to pick up these requests as part of the information to be provided to the Panel's Finance sub-group on 3rd February.

Resolved –

That the Panel:

- (a) notes the report; and
- (b) receives further information to its Finance sub-group on the financial savings derived from the transfer of governance business case, plus the costs associated with the transformation programme.

474 Freedom of Information Act Compliance Update Report

Considered –

The report of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner updating the Panel on FoIA compliance for the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) and North Yorkshire Police.

Caroline Blackburn introduced some of the detail from the report. The OPFCC now manages all of its own Fols and Subject Access Requests (SARs). All backlog for the OPFCC has now been cleared through the Civil Disclosure Unit (CDU) at NYP and through the OPFCC team. A recent internal audit has given positive assurance on the handling of Fols and SARs at the OPFCC. The Commissioner thanked her team for their work. The CDU made a self-referral to the ICO to seek guidance and support on how to manage the backlog. As a result, additional temporary resources have been put in place and the team has managed to clear its backlog.

It was noted that NYP receives a particularly high volume of Fol requests in comparison with other similar forces. Caroline highlighted that compliance for Fols in December 2020 had reached 86%.

The Panel acknowledged the good progress that had been made in recent months and recognised that it continues to be work in progress.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report.

475 Work Programme

Considered –

The report of the Panel Secretariat proposing a programme of work for the Panel.

It was agreed that the standing item on Covid-19 could be removed from the plan for the next meeting on 5th February. There is an opportunity for the Panel and Commissioner to use the reserve precept date on 22nd February to meet to take a further Covid-19 update, in addition to receiving an informal briefing on other policing and fire issues. Further arrangements will be finalised in due course.

It was noted that while there is still the possibility of elections taking place in May 2021 (for Commissioners and local councils), Members should retain the April 2021 Panel meeting date in the diary for the time being, in case it is needed.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the report.

476 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 12.42 pm.

DP.