

North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Annual Report 2023/24

Foreword from the Vice Chair

As Vice Chair of the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel I am pleased to introduce the Panel's Annual Report for 2023/24.

The last year has seen the Panel move into an era of change. With unitarisation in North Yorkshire in May 2023, the Panel now comprises just two constituent authorities; North Yorkshire Council and City of York Council. In addition, we have been preparing for the move into a new scrutiny relationship with the advent of the Mayoral Combined Authority for York and North Yorkshire and the recent election of our new Mayor, David Skaith. The MCA brings a wealth of opportunities for York and North Yorkshire and we hope that some of this influence can be brought to bear around the big issues in the arena of policing, fire and crime and not least around ensuring that our services can develop from a sustainable footing. We look forward to working with David and also Jo Coles as Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime, whose appointment the Panel was pleased to endorse last month.

As this report demonstrates, while these changes are fairly fundamental, they have had relatively minimal impact on the core business of the Panel as we have continued our focus on ensuring that the best policing and fire and rescue services are delivered for our communities.

As we move into this new era, it would be remiss not to pay tribute to those who have impacted on the policing, fire and crime agenda and the work of the Panel, and who have now moved on to other things. Firstly to former Commissioner Zoë Metcalfe, to whom the Panel has paid particular tribute for her work with partners in tackling violence against women and girls, in addition to her collegiate way of working with the Panel. Secondly, our thanks to Councillor Carl Les OBE, who stood down as Panel Chair in May 2024. Councillor Les has Chaired the Panel since its inception in 2012, working with three Commissioners and steering the Panel through a number of changes and challenges. On behalf of Panel colleagues past and present we thank him for his service.

Finally, my thanks go to the officers of the York and North Yorkshire Office for Police, Fire, Crime and Commissioning for their support of the work of the Panel over the last year, those officers from policing and fire who have attended our meetings and of course to those officers from Legal and Democratic Services at North Yorkshire Council who have continued to support and guide the Panel.

Cllr Danny Myers
Vice Chair

July 2024

1. What is the Police, Fire and Crime Panel?

Police and Crime Panels were established in England and Wales in 2012 to provide a check and balance function in relation to the performance of Police and Crime Commissioners, who also came into being at that time. Panels have a wide remit to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other actions taken, by the Commissioner in connection with the discharge of the Commissioner's functions. Panels have oversight of some of the Commissioner's key documents, decisions and reports, requiring them to provide information and answer any questions which the Panel considers necessary.

Police and Crime Panels are joint scrutiny bodies of the local authorities in the police service area. They are mainly comprised of elected members from these authorities, with normally at least two independent members who are co-opted to bring additional or complementary skills and knowledge. Councillor membership of a Panel must be geographically and politically proportionate. The Panel's membership in this reporting period is outlined in section 8 below.

With the transfer of fire and rescue governance to the Commissioner in 2018, the North Yorkshire Panel duly became the Police, Fire and Crime Panel ("the Panel"), to reflect a broadening out of its scrutiny functions.

The Panel does not scrutinise the Chief Constable or Chief Fire Officer or hold them to account. They are not required to attend Panel meetings but can be asked to attend with the Commissioner where it is felt that providing further operational context or clarification to a discussion would be helpful.

With the advent of devolution in York and North Yorkshire in 2024, the policing, fire and crime responsibilities of the area's Commissioner transferred to the Mayor on 7th May. The Mayor is legally able to delegate policing and crime functions to a Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and, in this area, this delegation extended to the fire and rescue authority functions which passed to the Mayor. A Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime commenced in post on 8th July 2024.

Similarly to the role of Commissioner, the Mayor has responsibility for setting the direction, objectives and budgets of North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and for holding the Chief Constable/Chief Fire Officer to account. The Panel's role is to scrutinise and support the performance of the Mayor (and Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime) and specifically to conduct the following statutory functions:

- To review the Mayor's draft Police and Crime / Fire and Rescue Plans and make recommendations on these;
- To review and make recommendations on proposed appointments for the roles of Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer – the Panel also has the power to veto these proposed appointments.
- To review and make recommendations on the Mayor's proposed level of Council Tax precept for policing and fire – the Panel has a power of veto for the Mayor's first precept proposal.
- To review and make recommendations on the Mayor's draft Annual Reports for Policing and Fire and Rescue;
- To consider non-criminal complaints made against the Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime.

The Mayor may delegate some of the policing and crime functions to a Deputy Mayor with the exception of:

- Issuing a Police and Crime Plan / Fire and Rescue Plan;

- Calculating the Council Tax precept requirement for policing and fire and rescue; and
- Appointing, suspending or requiring a Chief Constable or Chief Fire Officer to retire or resign.

Further details about the Panel's governance and recent publications can be found at <https://nypartnerships.org.uk/pfcp> Meeting papers and agendas can be found on the [North Yorkshire Council website](#).

Panel meetings take place roughly five to six times per year and are held in public. Support to the Panel is provided by the host authority which is North Yorkshire Council.

2. Meetings held during 2023/24

Formal Panel meetings are held in person and generally rotate venue between Northallerton, York and Selby. The Panel convened in person and in public on five occasions to undertake Panel business; on 21 June 2023, 20 July 2023, 12 October 2023, 11 January 2024 and 5 February 2024. Panel meetings are live broadcasted and recorded where possible and recordings can be viewed at <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees-and-meetings/live-meetings>.

One Panel meeting scheduled for April 2024 was cancelled due to observance of the pre-election period restrictions placed on councillors prior to the Mayoral election in early May.

The Panel remains keen to hear from and engage with the public in its role. In addition to its governance web site as referenced in section 1, meeting agendas and papers are published at least five clear working days prior to each meeting and the North Yorkshire Council Communications Team also support in disseminating social media messaging to promote upcoming meetings.

While there were only three members of the public and/or councillors who submitted questions or statements to the Panel in this reporting period, it is notable that as at end of May 2024, the average viewing figures for recorded Panel meetings in the 2023/24 municipal year were 184 views per meeting (an increase of 60 from 2022/23). This suggests that the public appreciate the ability to view Panel proceedings at a time and manner of their choosing.

Panel members have also continued to meet remotely for more informal briefings and development sessions during the period and these are outlined through this report.

3. Key Areas of Focus for the Panel in 2023/24

The Panel has reviewed a number of items over the course of the 2023/24 municipal year and the following provides an overview of some of these.

a) Scrutiny of implementation of the Risk and Resource Model for the fire and rescue service

Following the Commissioner's decision to approve the new North Yorkshire Fire and Recuse Service Risk and Resource Model (RRM) 2022/25 in September 2022, the Panel has been keen to identify what level of progress has been made in the implementation and monitoring of impact of the RRM.

Concerns were expressed by Members that the service had the slowest average response times nationally last year at 13 minutes and 9 seconds, which was more than two minutes slower than in 2012. The Panel sought views as to whether this represented a downward trend and whether the RRM would impact further adversely. regarding service response time generally when compared with national response data. The Chief Fire Officer spoke to the various factors which make North Yorkshire an 'outlier' in terms of the context surrounding its response times including its geography, travel times to call-outs and the lack of funding available to locate stations in more outlying areas.

The Panel heard that improvements are being made around service data capture to better support the RRM in 2025.

The Panel has requested to see data regarding the response times for Huntington once the changes have fully bedded in, to be able to better understand any impact they may have. There have been some delays in reporting to the Panel due to workforce changes and the Panel has requested a more detailed report later in 2024.

b) Scrutiny of the Commissioner's performance in relation to ensuring that adequate progress is made within the policing and fire services following the outcomes of inspection reports by HMICFRS

During this reporting period, the Panel has given focus to the Commissioner's progress in ensuring adequate improvements were made by both the police and fire and rescue services in response to the inspection reports of HMICFRS regarding:

- the 'PEEL' inspection of North Yorkshire Police 2021/22;
- the National Child Protection Inspection post-inspection review of North Yorkshire Police; and
- the re-visit findings of HMICFRS further to an inspection by them of the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2021/22.

This followed reports for both services which highlighted some areas determined by the inspectorate to be 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement'. The Panel's role is not to scrutinise the performance of those services or their operational leaders but to seek assurance that the Commissioner is ensuring an adequate level of progress and improvement is being reached within both services. Members conveyed particular concerns regarding:

- the need for rapid improvements to be made within the police service, principally in terms of response;
- necessary improvements in safeguarding measures around child protection;
- management of known sex offenders;
- the efficacy of arrangements for service collaboration; and
- progress in implementation of the Risk and Resource Model for the fire and rescue service.

At a special meeting convened in June 2023, the Commissioner set out comprehensively for the Panel how she ensures robust challenge and improvement to services, including through the launch of an Assurance Framework, renewal of governance around the EnableNY programme and the expectations she has set out for the police service in relation to a return on the investment made into the Force Control Room. The Panel requested further updates in the autumn of 2023 and in January 2024 following additional re-visits of both services by the inspectorate. The Panel was pleased that the 'causes for concern' raised for both services were fully discharged by its January 2024 meeting as sufficient progress had been made. However, the Panel noted that the inspectorate considers there is further work to be done in respect of refining and monitoring the EnableNY programme and this will continue to be an area of focus on the Panel's work programme in the year ahead.

c) Review of the Commissioner's Council Tax precept proposals for policing and fire 2024/25

Policing Precept

The Commissioner put forward a proposal to the Panel on 5 February 2024 to set the policing precept at £306.86, representing an increase of £11.77 (or 3.99%) over the 2023/24 level for a Band D property. The Panel heard that the funds levied from the precept would be invested back into priority areas such as the Force Control Room and continuing to ensure an effective frontline policing response. There will also be investment into areas of 'high harm' including specialist safeguarding teams, digital forensics and increasing the number of detectives as well as professional Standards, Neighbourhood and Criminal Justice.

The Commissioner outlined that she had chosen not to increase the precept by the maximum permissible (£13) as she was concerned to ask residents to fund only what was absolutely necessary.

The Panel noted that while the income for policing had increased, a lot of this had already been allocated due to significant increase in areas such as pay and the pension fund. It was further noted that 61% of residents responding to the public consultation had supported an increase of £10 or more. The Panel considered that the 3.99% proposed increase in precept would help achieve a balanced budget over the next four years, leaving the police service in a stable financial position for the incoming Mayor. On this basis, the Panel gave its support to the Commissioner's proposal to increase the policing precept for 2024/25 to £306.86.

Fire and Rescue Precept

The Panel considered the Commissioner's proposal to set the fire and rescue element of the Council Tax precept at £83.02 for 2024/25, which represented a 2.99% increase (or £2.41) over the 2023/24 level for a Band D property. Unfortunately, in spite of the best efforts of the Commissioner and the Panel in communicating with central government, fire and rescue authorities were not afforded the precept flexibility granted to Shire District Councils for 2024/25 and as such this was the maximum permissible increase for the service before a referendum would be triggered. It was noted that public support for service investment is nevertheless also high with 69% of respondents agreeing an increase of £2.41 and 54% agreeing an increase of £5.

The Panel heard that a 4% funding guarantee from government will place the service in a more financially comfortable position for 2024/25 than had previously been forecasted, with a balanced plan. However, the Panel remained concerned that the forward position is exceptionally tight and with draws on reserves needing to be made to bring stability. The Panel welcomed the efforts of the service to look creatively at adapting around this position, such as replacing appliances with newer second-hand models rather than purchasing from new.

Having taken into account the above factors, the Panel gave its support to the Commissioner's proposal to increase the fire and rescue precept for 2024/25 by £2.41 for a Band D property. The Panel also agreed to write again to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to emphasise the precarious position for the service in 2025/26 in the hope that additional precept flexibility will be granted.

d) Scrutiny of the performance of the Force Control Room in relation to handling of 101 and 999 calls

The Panel has continued to request an annual update on performance levels in the police Force Control Room (FCR) in relation to the 999 and 101 non-emergency numbers and, at its February 2024 meeting, sought detail on the impact of investment into the FCR.

The Panel heard that the following improvements to the FCR had been realised:

- a reduction in abandonment of 101 calls by 30% to 12% in January 2024;
- 999 call answer time average reduced from 19 seconds in October 2022 to 6 seconds in December 2023;
- average 101 call answer times down from 3 minutes 34 seconds in October 22 to 1 minute 34 seconds in December 2023.

The Panel commended the improvements made to the 999 and 101 services and asked whether calls which are not appropriate for the service impact significantly on its performance. The Commissioner outlined that a triage/switchboard system will be introduced to help with this although there is no significant impact on the service given to the public by such calls. The Panel were also given reassurance by the Commissioner that the FCR will be well able to deal with any surge in call volumes experienced going forward. Investment made will increase numbers of dispatch officers, the new switchboard, supervision levels and the introduction of live chat.

A further performance update will be taken early in 2025 to ensure that monitoring of the position continues as the impact of recent investments is realised.

e) Review of progress against the strategy to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and the development of a Victims' Centre in York

The Panel takes an annual progress report from the Commissioner in relation to the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy published in 2022, which sets out a collective commitment by the Commissioner and other groups and organisations to tackle VAWG. Members discussed with the Commissioner the importance of being able to meet the rising demand for specialist support services and to pick up any relevant intelligence around referral numbers. The Commissioner highlighted the need to review capacity and look at long-term funding strategies for support services.

The Panel asked about the local findings of the Operation Soteria Bluestone survey and it was highlighted that most victims felt treated with dignity and respect by police officers locally although further assessment will be done at North Yorkshire Police to be able to implement the survey's findings.

A key area of interest for the Panel is around ensuring public trust and confidence in the police, how this will be assessed and scrutiny of numbers of reported rapes going through to prosecution. The Panel heard about the Commissioner's rolling survey on trust and confidence and about the two scrutiny panels focussing on domestic abuse and rape/sexual offences cases that haven't been put forward to the CPS. In terms of the latter, this has been beneficial in looking at where the victim has withdrawn and ensuring the learning is shared with the police service.

The Panel have previously commended the Commissioner's work to develop a new Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) and heard that unfortunately there have been some unavoidable delays to

progress with the build but that work is expected to start by the end of 2023. Panel members are keen to view the site prior to opening.

The Panel will continue to review progress against the Delivery Plan on an annual basis.

f) Tackling hate crime

Following a helpful informal briefing provided to the Panel by North Yorkshire Police, the Panel took an update on efforts to tackle hate crime within York and North Yorkshire. Members questioned whether, given the prioritisation of hate crime as an issue, the Commissioner feels the hate crime unit is sufficiently staffed and resourced. The Commissioner acknowledged that hate crime is unfortunately a 'growth area' and that the Panel can expect to see this prioritisation come through in the police service's organisational re-design.

g) Considering the Commissioner's proposed appointment for Chief Constable

The Panel was required to meet to review the proposed appointment of Tim Forber as Chief Constable – following the retirement of Chief Constable Lisa Winward – in January 2024. Following a confirmation hearing (held in public), the Panel were pleased to recommend Mr Forber's appointment.

h) Preparations for Mayoral devolution

Ahead of Mayoral devolution in York and North Yorkshire, the Panel reviewed and revised its governance documents, with formal agreement from the constituent authorities as required. The changes wrought by devolution have minimal impact of the Panel's statutory or other routine business. The Panel no longer legally has a role to review proposed appointments of senior officers such as Chief Executive or Chief Financial Officer and may only now consider non-criminal complaints regarding the conduct of the Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime within that remit.

4. Responses to consultations

The Panel has formally responded and/or contributed to the following local/national consultations during the 2023/24 financial year:

- Home Affairs Select Committee review of Police and Crime Commissioners – (October 2023).

The Panel has also written twice to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in this period, in support of the Commissioner's efforts to seek greater precept flexibility for the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

5. Forward Plan – Key Issues for 2024/25

The Panel has a number of issues on the forward work programme for the 2024/25 municipal year, including statutory and non-statutory business such as:

- Scrutinise the performance of the EnableNY programme of service collaboration;
- Review impact of the implementation of the Risk and Resource Model for the fire and rescue service;
- Review and make recommendations on the Mayor's draft Annual Reports for Policing and Fire and Rescue 2023/24;
- Review and make recommendations on the Mayor's proposed Council Tax precept levels for 2025/26 for both policing and fire and rescue;
- Consider progress made to tackle violence against women and girls;

- Review work being undertaken and planned to tackle hate crime;
- Scrutinise how rural crime is being tackled, including wildlife crime;
- Reviewing progress to embed equality, diversity and inclusivity within both the police and fire and rescue services.

6. Development of the Panel

The Panel has continued to seek opportunities for informal briefings, training opportunities and development workshops to help continue members' awareness of regional and national issues and to enhance their scrutiny role. Panel Members and supporting officers have been involved in the following during 2023/24:

- **Briefing on hate crime in York and North Yorkshire** - ahead of their annual update in October 2023, Panel members were provided with an informal briefing on the context and scale of hate crime along with how this is being tackled in the force area.
- **Organisational re-design of North Yorkshire Police** – while centring on an operational policing matter, the Panel felt it would be helpful to better understand the key elements of the organisational re-design of the police service to help better inform discussions at Panel and an informal briefing was provided by key service colleagues in January 2024.
- **Risk and Resource Model** – the Panel received an informal briefing from fire and rescue service colleagues on the principles of the new model in January 2024.
- **Finance Sub-Group** – the Panel has continued to make use of informal opportunities to meet remotely with the Commissioner's Chief Financial Officer, particularly prior to the precept-setting, to gain further insight into the budget position. This group is open to all Panel Members and helps to develop lines of enquiry for Panel meetings. A briefing was provided for newer Panel members on the budgetary position in November 2023, followed by a more specific pre-precept briefing for the sub-group in February 2024.
- **Regional Yorkshire and Humber Panel Network** – the Panel has subscribed annually to membership of a Member and officer network of Panels in Yorkshire and the Humber since around 2018. Meetings were held in September 2023 (in person) and March 2024 (remotely, officers only); with the former meeting attended by a councillor member of the Panel and the Panel's supporting officer. Further to the planned development by the Home Office of a national best practice 'hub' for Panels, it was agreed that the formal regional network as facilitated by Frontline Consulting will draw to a close. However, it is planned that the Panels in this region will continue to meet on topics of common interest, facilitated by the supporting officers.
- **National Police, Fire and Crime Panels Conference** – the national conference, co-ordinated by Frontline Consulting, was convened as a hybrid event (Warwick Conference Centre/Zoom) on 9th November. The conference was attended remotely by two of the Panel's councillor Members (including the Chair) and the supporting officer. The event included panel discussion from Commissioners and commentators plus workshop sessions on public confidence in policing, measuring success and preparing for change.

Further familiarisation visits are planned for the Panel in 2024/25, including a visit to the Force Control Room and the Rural Task Force.

7. Complaints handling by the Panel

The Panel has a statutory role to consider non-criminal complaints made regarding the conduct of the Commissioner.

During the municipal year 2023/24:

- Six complaints were received by the Panel.
 - Four of these complaints had regard to North Yorkshire Police and the conduct of individual officers. As such these were not recorded or considered by the Panel but were re-directed as appropriate.
 - Two complaints were recorded but were determined by the Panel’s Lead Officer to not require any further action as they did not pertain to the Commissioner’s own conduct or were insubstantial in nature.

Further information about the Panel’s complaints handling process and complaints publications can be found at <https://nypartnerships.org.uk/pfcpcomplaints>

8. Panel budget for 2023/24

As host authority, North Yorkshire Council receives an annual grant from the Home Office to support the administration of the Panel. For the 2023/24 financial year the Home Office grant was **£65,260**. The Panel is required to report biannually to the Home Office as to how the grant has been spent, including provision of a performance report against Key Performance Indicators.

North Yorkshire Council submitted a year-end return in June 2024 to claim the full amount of £65,260 for 2023/24.

The Panel also received £10,526 from City of York Council for the 2023/24 financial year, to contribute towards both administration costs and Member allowances.

For the 2023/24 financial year, North Yorkshire Council absorbed an estimated £16,905 in costs for the running of the Panel, in addition to the grant and income received. This is an increase of over £12,000 on 2022/23. This is principally related to the increase in the number of allowances payable to Panel members from North Yorkshire Council following unitarisation, in addition to the loss of around £3,000 income from the former Hambleton District Council.

North Yorkshire Council anticipates that it will be offered a grant of £65,260 for the 2024/25 financial year by the Home Office. However, the award will not be confirmed until August 2024. The council will need to review with the Panel Chair how any further overspends are best managed and the Independent Remuneration Panel has also committed to a routine review of SRAs to the Panel in this financial year.

The following table highlights actual spend for 2023/24.

Expenditure Breakdown 2023/24 financial year (£)

	92,691
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made up of:

Support to the Panel (inc on-costs) Secretariat, Legal, Finance, Business Support & Communications staff	57,563
Printing / Postage / Admin / Meeting costs	950
Subscriptions, training and conferences	810

Panel Member expenses (inc Member allowances, expenses)	<u>33,368</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>92,691</u>
Home Office total grant 2021-22	<u>65,260</u>
Income received from City of York 2023-24	<u>10,526</u>
Total Income Received	<u>75,786</u>
Total overspend incurred by NYCC	<u>16,905</u>

9. Membership

Membership of the Panel during the 2023/24 municipal year was as follows:

North Yorkshire Council	Cllr Chris Aldred Cllr Lindsay Burr MBE Cllr Tim Grogan Cllr Carl Les OBE Cllr Rich Maw Cllr Heather Moorhouse Cllr Peter Wilkinson
City of York Council	Cllr Emilie Knight Cllr Danny Myers Cllr Michael Pavlovic
Co-opted independent member	Fraser Forsyth
Co-opted independent member	Mags Godderidge
Co-opted independent member	Martin Walker