

Women's Forum

Minutes of a meeting of the Women's Forum held at The Jeffrey Room - The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Tuesday 28 November 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present: Olivia Bent, Rachel Duncan, Cllr Rosie Humphries, Stephen Mold, Helen King, Vaughan Ashcroft, Debs Burns, Debbie MacColl

86. Welcomes, Introductions and Apologies

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and introductions made. Apologies were received from Neelam Aggarwal, Michelle Shaw, Cllr Cathrine Russell and Rachel Packman

87. Code of Conduct

88. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

89. OPFCC Budget Priorities 2023/24

The OPFCC Budget consultation would be going live the following week. OPFCC Stephen Mold attended the meeting with Helen King, Chief Finance Officer, who would shortly be retiring and Vaughan Ashcroft who would be taking over from her. Stephen reminded the group that the governance of NFRS was transferred to the PCC on 1/1/19. There had been several issues such as recruitment freezes which had affected operational delivery, an inherent budget shortfall, no transfer of reserves or capital funding and an ageing estate requiring significant investment. Since that date the annual budget is almost £8m more, £10m of capital investment, increase in wholtime fire-fighters from 242 to 254, over £5m in one off grants. Over 40% of the operational fire tender fleet will have been replaced by 2024 as most had reached, or were reaching, the end of their useful life. Technology has been updated, with most of the significant front and back-office systems replaced or the replacement scheduled. A thorough review of the estate had been carried out with recommendations made to ensure facilities are sustainable, more environmentally friendly and less reliance on fossil fuels. Welfare and changing facilities have been refurbished.

Where we are now – Fire:

Prevention

- Continue to collaborate with partners to target those most at risk.
- More than 5,600 home fire safety visits conducted in 2022/23 to help some of the most vulnerable live in safer homes.

Protection

- Working with local authorities to support planning process and HMO inspections, business, landlord and commercial forums.
- 763 risk-based inspections carried out in 2022/23 compared to 425 in 2021/22
- Fire Protection officers visited more than 1,000 premises in 2022 to help significantly reduce the risk of fires in buildings where people live, work and visit.

Where we are now – Police

- Highest number of police officers ever with over 1,500
- Police officers in Neighbourhood policing now doubled to 116 and increasing.
- The first Force to take burglary seriously and ensure all victims of a residential dwelling burglary were visited.
- N'hants has seen lowest increase in crime
- Serious knife crime trend is decreasing
- Serious Violence Duty has been introduced
- Neighbourhood crime, personal robbery and theft from persons increasing at a lower rate than nationally.
- Over £1.2m worth of stolen plant, trailers and vehicles recovered.
- £1.3m ANPR expansion – 294 cameras on posts, 17 new car kits, 10 rapid deployment cameras, 4 more members of staff to keep the network running.

Growing Population

Government grants are allocated by historic formulas which was frozen on 2011/2. However, Northamptonshire's population has increased above the national average (2012 – 2021 – national average increase = 6.5% while Northamptonshire increased by 13.5% over the same period). What does this mean in real terms?

- We receive £20 less in police grant per head of population than the national average - £15m less in real terms.
- We receive £23 less than Nottinghamshire in police grant per head of population. In real terms that is £17m.
- If the police grant formula was based on number of households (as with Council tax) and if Northamptonshire was funded on the same basis as Nottinghamshire, it would be nearer £39m additional funding.

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service is the third lowest funded fire and rescue service in the country. Good progress has been made in building reserves which are now sufficient.

Police & Fire are NOT immune to the cost of living challenges and both services has experienced inflationary pressures. Sustaining essential Police and Fire services means there will be pressure on the medium-term plans and efficiencies will need to be found.

Financial context

Fire - £29.6m

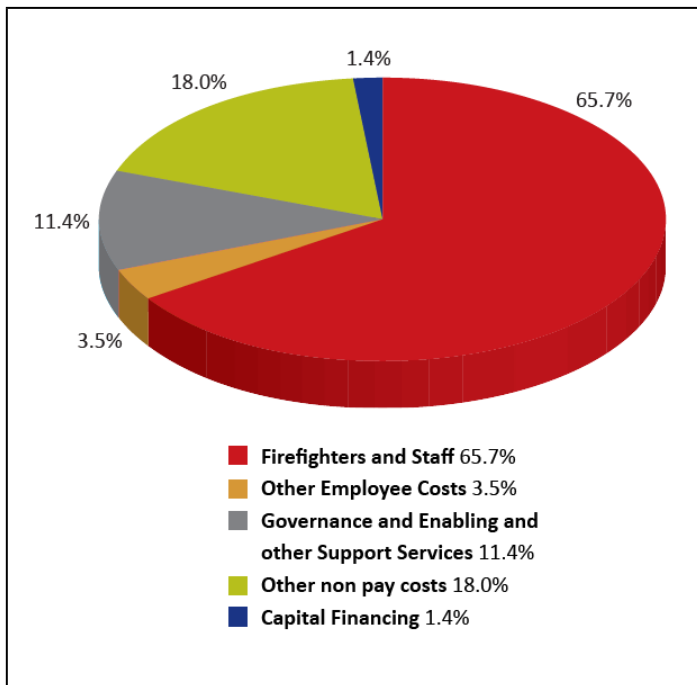
Funded by:-

- 64% local taxpayers (Council Tax precept)
- 22% Business Rates and top up grant
- 14% government grants

Current Band D council tax precept - £73.20

- 86% supports operational firefighters, staff and essential operational capital investment.
- 11.4% funds essential enabling services support services such as payroll, finance, HR, digital, estates and governance.

Where does the money go?



Fire were very efficient and lean with what they achieved on their budget. A new female Chief was coming in in the new year.

Policing - £168.8m

Funded by:-

- 45% local taxpayers (council tax precept)
- 55% government grants

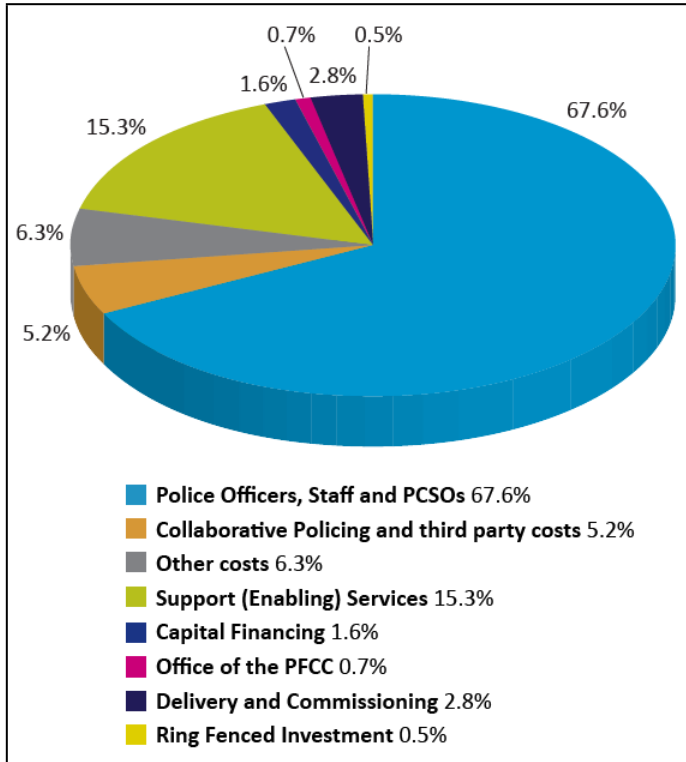
Current Band D Council tax precept - £293.04

The policing budget covers the costs of running Northamptonshire Police, the Office of the Police & Fire Crime Commissioner and Commissioning, Delivery and Victims services.

- 96.5% operational policing delivery and essential operational capital investment

- 2.8% delivery and commissioning services which work towards reducing demand, support victims and make the county safer.
- 0.7% the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner staff and office costs including audit committee costs.

Where does the money go?



Budget for 2024/5 – next steps

December 2023

- Initial work on draft budgets for Police and Fire will be completed
- The Government will issue the funding settlements for Fire and Police

This included the victims and witnesses programme, youth programme and intervention. They were also looking at additional investment in DV and SV including child on adult and early intervention. The relationship with the Children's Trust was much improved with support for schools including healthy relationships for primary school children. Childhood trauma doubles the chances of getting on the criminal pathway and if you can identify this and do some early intervention work you can change their course. The Commissioner is the recipient of all complaints which meant he did see everything. Stephen stated he was not getting the feeling people were feeling safer and wanted to break down the demographics of who/what/where to help set the priorities.

Delivery & Commissioning Services

Delivery and Commissioning	Budget (£m)	Grants/Income (£m)	Net (£m)	Delivery and Commissioning	Budget (£m)	Grants/Income (£m)	Net (£m)
Commissioning	0.100	(0.075)	0.025	Delivery and Accountability	0.086	-	0.086
Victims and Witnesses & DV support	2.233	(1.321)	0.912	Crime Prevention	0.260	-	0.260
Joint Communications Team with Fire	0.133	-	0.133	Customer Service - Complaints	0.181	-	0.181
Early Intervention and Youth	2.455	-	2.455	Police, Fire and Crime Plan Delivery Fund	0.250	-	0.250
Reducing Reoffending	0.716	-	0.716				
Total Expenditure					6.414	(1.396)	5.018

Between December 2023 and January 2024 local people will be asked for their views on what they wish to pay towards Police and Fire services.

The Commissioner will look at all information before making his proposals in **February 2024**.

Cllr Humphries asked, even though the Officer number was at its highest, now many more were required. Stephen responded that he had asked the same question of the Force but he said he would like to see 400 in Neighbourhood policing for a reassuring presence. The rural areas, for example, did not have as much crime but they still paid taxes. This number was not likely to be achieved so there was a need to use technology and be smarter in how the officers they had were used. Investment in people was also required, both Fire and Police were very good at the harder skills training but not so much on the softer people skills.

Stephen added the main question was what level to raise the Council Tax in order to maintain the level they were currently at. Workshops were being planned across the county as well as the survey as well as speaking to other Forums to give everyone ample chance to give their opinions.

Rachel stated that she had attended the Serious Violence market event and, even though the Strategic Needs Assessment was not yet finalised, there was a lot of information coming out of this and the early findings had shown that DV was so large it had to be taken out and looked at separately as it was skewing the figures. We have to recognise the need to prioritise women's safety and their confidence in the services and use the funding appropriately.

Stephen responded a lot of work and investment was being made around the Night-Time Economy with Op Kyack and ID scanners being installed in venues open after 1pm which had already resulted in one arrest and prosecution for sexual violence. More work was needed in changing male behaviours and he was working with Vicki Martin around this.

Conversations had been held with WNC around earmarking some funding for prevention and perpetrator work and he was trying to get other partners to come to the table with funding but, just when we need to re-double efforts, some partners were wanting to freeze their contributions. In order to spend it, he needed to raise it first. Work could be targeted so much better with the Observatory data.

90. **Cycling for Communities**

Olivia introduced herself as the Cycling Officer funded by British Cycling and WNC by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This was a 2year partnership until September 2025 with potential for an extension. It was community focussed rather than competitive.

Activities include

- Bike library
- pedal parties,
- active travel – towns and cities are congested with motor vehicles so looking to support people in cycling to work
- working with Northants Sport at the bike park to set up an under 18 cycling club
- British Cycling had funding for disability cycling with adaptive bikes, Clubs needed to affiliate with British Cycling in order to access funding.
- Breeze Rides were women only rides and they were looking to get more leaders trained up in the New Year.
- Bikeability in schools – already working with some schools in Daventry
- Speaking with girls in schools to find out what barriers they faced
- Coaching qualifications

Rachel asked if there was any chance of the bike library linking in with other charities as some of the people in refuge had mentioned bikes. Olivia explained the Daventry project was where stolen bikes had been recovered but the original owner was not traceable. There had been about 500 bikes but when visited there were only a few that were actually useable. She was still in the process of finding out who was doing what. As well as Daventry there was also Delapre and Umbrella Fair restoring bikes. Rachel stated she had a contact at Umbrella Fair and would contact them directly. Cllr Humphries stated she was trying to get active travel further up the agenda and was there going to be an overview of how many more residents were getting on bikes. Also Men in Sheds were asking for donated bikes and repurposing them. Olivia responded that Men in Sheds were engaged with the Bike Library, British Cycling were keeping a tabs on people attending Breeze Rides and how many were using the bike park. She was also working with the active quarter in Northampton. It was intended to have a connection from the Delapre hub to the bike park as the bike park was owned by the Golf Course so it was not possible to have any bike storage there.

Olivia can be contacted on oliviabent@britishcycling.org.uk

91. **International Women's Day Event Saturday 9 March 2024**

The event would be at the Guildhall on Saturday 9 March, 11am – 3pm. Due to pressures in the New Year, planning had already started. Booking of a stall would be through an online form which would be circulated to members. If any space

remained on 5 January, it would be opened up. There was capacity for 4 workshops with 3 booked already. The theme for this year is #Inspire Inclusion. Inspirational Woman nominations would open up on Monday 18 December until February 4 with the 2 categories of Business and Community. The link will be circulated when available.

92. **Community Information Exchange**

Debs – 16 Days of Activism – events until 10 December. International Day of People with Disabilities event at Fernie Fields on Friday 1 December.

Rachel – managed to get funding for a DA health co-ordinator to be hosted by NDAS to improve DA response in health settings and give professionals the confidence to ask questions. Also lottery funding for a volunteer co-ordinator. The whole DA setting nationally was having issues recruiting but they were finding volunteering a good stepping-stone into to paid roles.

Debbie – the next Women's Business Network meet was on Thursday January 18 at 12 noon for those attending face to face and 12.15 for those joining by Teams. The session would be a workshop on goal setting. If you want to attend and are not already booked on, please contact debbie.maccoll@westnorthants.gov.uk.

93. **Items for Future Meetings**

94. **Date of Next Meeting**

Next Meeting will be on Tuesday January 30 at 11am in the Godwin Room, Guildhall and on Teams.