

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

30 NOVEMBER 2023

Report Title	Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Work Programme
Report Author	James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, West Northamptonshire Council James.edmunds@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers		
West MO (for West and joint papers)	Catherine Whitehead	22/11/2023
West S151 (for West and joint papers)	Martin Henry	16/11/2023

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Outline Work Programme

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to enable the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel to review overall progress with the development and delivery of its 2023/24 work programme and to consider specific related matters.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The report invites the Panel to review the latest version of its outline work programme for 2023/24 and to endorse this subject to any changes that the Panel considers to be necessary.
- 2.2. The report also invites the Panel to confirm the date for its final regular meeting in 2023/24.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel:
- a) Endorses the latest version of its outline work programme for 2023/24, subject to any changes that the Panel considers to be necessary.
 - b) Agrees that the final regular Panel meeting in 2023/24 be held on 14 March 2024.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The recommendations are intended to support the effective operation of the Panel and the delivery of its statutory responsibilities during 2023/24.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and supporting legislation give various specific responsibilities to the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel ("the Panel"). These are principally as follows:
- Scrutinising and reporting on the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)'s proposed Police and Fire and Rescue precepts
 - Scrutinising and reporting on the PFCC's Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan
 - Scrutinising and reporting on the PFCC's Annual Report on the delivery of Police and Crime Plan objectives and on the annual Fire and Rescue Statement reporting compliance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework
 - Scrutinising and reporting on proposed appointments by the PFCC to certain positions (: Deputy PFCC; Chief Executive; Chief Finance Officer; Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police; and Chief Fire Officer of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service)
 - Dealing with complaints from members of the public about the conduct of the PFCC.
- 5.2 In addition, the legislation referred to in paragraph 5.1 above gives the Panel the general responsibility to review and scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, by the PFCC in connection with the discharge of his functions and to make reports or recommendations to the PFCC with respect to these matters. The Panel is required to carry out its role with a view to supporting the PFCC in effectively exercising his functions.
- 5.3 It is standard practice for the Panel to set an annual work programme to provide a framework within which it carries out its functions and the practical tasks these involve. The work programme is made up of a combination of statutory and discretionary scrutiny work; matters relating to the operation of the Panel; and any supporting activities such as briefings or training. The work programme covers a rolling 12-month period. The work programme is considered at the first Panel meeting in the municipal year. It is then kept under regular review by the Panel and modified or updated as necessary, with a view to ensuring that it is focussed on the aim of using available capacity to best effect.
- 5.4 It should be noted that the work programme does not represent the sum total of activity that the Panel may carry out during that period. The work programme focusses on the regular meetings of the Panel and on the functions that it must carry out at set points during the year, such as scrutiny of the PFCC's proposed precepts and Annual Report. The Panel carries out other functions when the need to do so arises, which must then be added to the planned work programme. Scrutiny of a proposed senior appointment by the PFCC is a case in point as the need for the Panel to do this may arise at any time, it is one of the Panel's statutory functions, and it

requires the Panel to hold a meeting to carry out a confirmation hearing with the candidate in order to make a recommendation on the proposed appointment.

6. Issues and Choices

Work programme – general

- 6.1 The Panel considered its outline work programme at its meeting on 15 June 2023 and identified items of business that it wished to consider during the year ahead alongside its mandatory tasks. The resulting outline work programme is included with this report (at Appendix A).
- 6.2 The work programme should not be seen as fixed and it is open to the Panel to review and modify it at any time as the municipal year progresses. The work programme can be informed by input from a range of sources, including suggestions from individual Panel members and from the PFCC. The Panel should consider suggested business from all sources on its merits, with a view to maintaining a work programme that reflects the Panel's remit, has the support of Panel members, is realistically deliverable within available resources and has the potential to produce the most worthwhile outcomes.

Scrutiny of support for early intervention activity

- 6.3 The Panel agreed in 2022/23 to carry out a piece of task-and-finish scrutiny work on early intervention activity with young people at risk of becoming involved in criminal activity in Northamptonshire. A working group was appointed for this purpose and met three times during the first half of 2023, although it was still at an early stage of information-gathering. The Panel agreed at its meeting on 15 June 2023 that the work should be progressed in order to produce a report back to the Panel as soon as possible.
- 6.4 Since that resolution the Panel has needed to give its overriding attention to matters relating to, and arising from, the appointment of an interim Chief Fire Officer by the PFCC in July 2023. This has meant that the work on early intervention has been in abeyance during recent months. There have also been related changes to the context in which the work was originally commenced. In light of this situation, as part of reviewing its overall work programme the Panel is invited to confirm whether the task-and-finish scrutiny work on early intervention activity should be resumed.

Date of the final regular Panel meeting in 2023/24

- 6.5 The Panel agreed its meeting schedule for 2023/24 at its meeting on 2 February 2023. This schedule included a Panel meeting on 18 April 2024. This date should not have been included in the draft schedule presented to the Panel as it is within the pre-election period for the PFCC election on 2 May 2024. The pre-election period is due to start on 26 March 2024 and it would not be appropriate for the Panel to meet after this date.
- 6.6 The need to find a new date for the final regular Panel meeting in 2023/24 was brought to the attention of the Panel at its meeting on 15 June 2023. The Panel agreed that this meeting should

be moved to an earlier date. Due to other business since then there has not been an opportunity to ask the Panel to confirm a new date.

- 6.7 It is now proposed that the final regular Panel meeting in 2023/24 should be held on 14 March 2024. This date uses the Panel's standard meeting day, is well before the start of the pre-election period and takes account of current scheduled meetings at North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC): NNC is due to have an Executive meeting on the morning of 14 March 2024; WNC has a Council meeting on the evening of 21 March 2024. It is open to the Panel to agree a different date for its final regular meeting in 2023/24 if it identifies one that it prefers to 14 March 2024.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 There are no specific resources or financial implications associated with this report. The normal operation of the Panel is supported by grant funding that the Panel's host authority can claim from the Home Office for the purpose of maintaining a panel for the Northamptonshire Police area.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposal.

7.3 Risk

- 7.3.1 The Panel should ensure that its work programme enables it to carry out its statutory role and functions effectively. Factors that might represent a risk to this could include setting a work programme that did not reflect the Panel's statutory functions; that was unfocussed or included too much business to be realistically deliverable; or that was fixed at the start of the year and did not allow the flexibility to respond to issues that might subsequently arise. These risks should be mitigated by the Panel reviewing its work programme and any associated matters at each of its normal meetings during the municipal year. This will enable the Panel to consider any changes to existing arrangements that may seem necessary, with a view to ensuring that the work programme and the specific activities contained within it remain deliverable within the Panel's overall capacity and the resources available to support it.

8. Background Papers

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

Policing and Crime Act 2017

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Rules of Procedure