

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

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Report Title	Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Work Programme 2024/25 and operating arrangements
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Outline Work Programme 2024/25

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to enable the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel to consider and agree its work programme for 2024/25 as well as to consider and agree the approach it will take on certain matters connected with the operation of the Panel.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The report invites the Panel to consider and agree its work programme for 2024/25, including any specific areas or priorities for scrutiny, reports to be requested from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, and the timetable for identified activities. The work programme will support the Panel in carrying out its statutory responsibilities effectively through the year ahead.
- 2.2. In addition, the report invites the Panel to consider and agree whether to continue to participate in two network groups relevant to its role: the East Midlands Police and Crime Panels Network and the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel:
- a) Agrees the content of its work programme for 2024/25.
 - b) Agrees to continue its membership of the East Midlands Police and Crime Panels Network for 2024/25.
 - c) Agrees to continue its membership of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels for 2024/25.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The recommendations are intended to support the effective operation of the Panel during 2024/25 and the delivery of its statutory responsibilities by establishing a work programme for the year; and by enabling the Panel to agree its membership of relevant information-sharing network groups.

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 has previously been 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 can then be 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.

6. Issues and Choices

Work Programme 2024/25

- 6.1 An outline work programme for the Panel for 2024/25 is included with this report (at Appendix A). This incorporates statutory business outlined in paragraph 5.1 above; regular monitoring reports that the previous Panel chose to receive to support its more general scrutiny role; and items of business relating to the operation of the Panel. The document also lists some other potential items of business and supporting activity that the Panel may wish to consider.
- 6.2 It is emphasised that this outline work programme is being presented to the Panel as a starting point for discussion that will produce the final version. The work programme may be informed by input from a range of sources, including suggestions from the previous Panel, from individual Panel members and from the PFCC. The work programme as a whole, the specific discretionary topics included in it, and the working methods to be used to deliver it, should ultimately be set by the current Panel. The Panel should aim to set 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.
- 6.3 Local Government Association guidance for panels on policing and fire governance gives the following advice on work programmes:

Given the breadth of responsibilities of a commissioner, the number of policies within a police and crime plan, and the complexity of policing and criminal justice systems (and fire and rescue services), panels may often feel there is a long list of agenda items but not enough time to do anything in detail or as well as they would choose. A work programme helps a panel to plan its work to reflect the resources available and its capacity. It can be drawn up at the start of each municipal year and kept under review at panel meetings in order to improve prioritisation.

A work programme helps a panel to:

- *evaluate issues which are and are not priorities*
- *manage its limited time and resources more effectively*
- *plan its routine business in the calendared cycle of meetings*
- *prepare for its regular special functions*
- *enable it to carry out value-added proactive activity such as evidence sessions and task and finish groups from time to time as capacity allows.*

It is important for the panel to develop its work programme in conjunction with the commissioner's office, drawing on the commissioner's forward plan. This liaison enables the panel to focus on key matters in more timely ways with access to the necessary briefings and reports.

Work programming can add value by:

- *Promoting openness and transparency to demonstrate what the panel is likely to be doing, allowing others to engage in that process.*
- *Ensuring that the panel keeps to strategic issues and focuses on the commissioner's activities and priorities in the plan.*
- *Providing the commissioner with a level of certainty and assurance, as s/he will know which issues the panel would like to raise with her/him and the topics it will be likely to investigate – why, how, where and when.*
- *Making it easier for the panel and other bodies to work together, minimising the duplication of work and providing a stronger evidence base for the panel.*

Participation in the East Midlands Police and Crime Panels Network

6.4 The Panel has previously participated in the East Midlands Police and Crime Panels Network that has operated since 2014. The Network is intended to be an information and support network for the five panels in the region: Derbyshire; Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland; Lincolnshire; Northamptonshire; and Nottinghamshire. It is administered by Frontline Consulting Associates (FCA), which provides advice, consultancy and learning and development activity in the public sector. The Network holds two information-sharing meetings per year, which can be attended by 2-3 representatives from each panel. Network members also get access to 'helpline' style advice on issues and queries and a 10% discount on the cost of any training purchased from FCA. The Panel is invited to consider whether to continue its membership of the Network for 2024/25. The cost of this is £420.

Participation in the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels

6.5 The National Association was established in April 2018 as a special interest group of the Local Government Association. The National Association aims to represent and promote the views and interests of Police, Fire and Crime panels in England and Wales. Its specific purposes include providing a forum for discussion of issues affecting panels; sharing ideas and experience; promoting good practice; supporting liaison and dialogue with other relevant agencies; facilitating common responses by panels to relevant consultations; horizon scanning; and promoting better public understanding of the role of panels. The National Association is led by an elected Chair and Executive Committee and administered by Democratic Services at Essex County Council. The National Association operates on a non-subscription model and there is no cost for membership. The Panel has been a member of the National Association since 2020. The Panel is invited to consider whether to continue its membership for 2024/25.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 It is intended that the resource implications associated with the proposed decisions set out in this report will be accommodated within grant funding that the Panel's host authority is able to claim from the Home Office for the purpose of maintaining a panel for the Northamptonshire

Police area. The specific cost of membership of the East Midlands Police and Crime Panels Network can also be met from this grant funding.

7.2 **Legal**

7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposal.

7.3 **Risk**

7.3.1 The principal risk associated with the recommended decisions is that the Panel agrees a work programme that is not sufficiently effective. This situation could be caused by a range of factors: for example, if the work programme did not reflect the Panel's statutory functions; if the work programme was unfocussed or included too much business to be realistically deliverable; or if the work programme 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 taking a considered view of the work programme at the start of the year, informed – but not bound – by the work of its predecessor. The Panel should then review the work programme at each of its subsequent meetings through the municipal year and amend it as may be considered necessary. Throughout, the Panel should ensure 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

Policing and fire governance – Local Government Association guidance for police and crime panels (2019)