

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

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Report Title	Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Work Programme 2021/22
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Outline Work Programme 2021/22

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to enable the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel to review progress with the development and delivery of its 2021/22 work programme as well as to consider other matters relating to the operation of the Panel.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The report invites the Panel to review the latest version of its outline work programme for 2021/22 and to endorse this subject to any changes that the Panel considers to be necessary.
- 2.2. In addition, the report provides updates on the latest position with regard to the following matters relating to the operation of the Panel
- Location of Panel meetings
 - Remuneration of independent co-opted Panel members

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel:
- a) Endorses its outline work programme for 2021/22, subject to any changes that the Panel considers to be necessary.
 - b) Agrees the location(s) to be used for its future formal meetings, taking into account the potential approach set out in paragraph 5.9 of the report.
 - c) Agrees that independent co-opted members of the Panel should be paid an annual allowance of £500 from 2021/22, subject to confirmation of the provision of Police & Crime Panel grant funding to the host authority.
- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation(s) – The recommendations are intended to support the effective operation of the Panel during 2021/22 and the delivery of its statutory responsibilities.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 The Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Policing & Crime Act 2017 and supporting legislation give various specific responsibilities to the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel (“the Panel”). These are principally as follows:
- Scrutinising and reporting on the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC)’s proposed Police and Fire & Rescue precepts
 - Scrutinising and reporting on the PFCC’s Police & Crime Plan and Fire & Rescue Plan
 - Scrutinising and reporting on the PFCC’s Annual Report on the delivery of Police & Crime Plan objectives and on the annual Fire & Rescue Statement reporting compliance with the Fire & 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 & Rescue Service)
 - Dealing with complaints from members of the public about the conduct of the PFCC.
- 4.2 In addition, the legislation referred to in paragraph 4.1 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.
- 4.3 It is standard practice for the Panel to agree a work programme that provides 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. Issues and Choices

Outline Work Programme 2021/22

- 5.1 The Panel considered its outline work programme at its meeting on 17th June 2021 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).
- 5.2 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.

Location for Panel meetings

- 5.3 The Panel was invited at its meeting on 17th June 2021 to consider the location(s) to be used for its formal meetings in 2021/22, given the need to resume physical meetings following the expiry of legislation permitting remote meetings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Panel agreed the following resolutions on this matter:
- a) *The Panel prioritises the following considerations in relation to the locations to be used for its formal meetings in 2021/22:*
- *The ability to webcast meetings*
 - *A location that is relatively central in Northamptonshire, that is accessible and that offers appropriate parking.*
- b) *The Panel requests that a proposal regarding the future location of its formal meetings be developed for consideration by the Panel.*
- 5.4 The Panel Secretariat has since carried out further work to develop a proposal regarding the future location of formal meetings, as requested by the Panel.
- 5.5 It is logical that the Panel should seek to use local authority venues for its meetings. The priority set out at paragraph 5.3(a) above directs away from holding meetings in Corby, Daventry, Thrapston or Towcester, as they are towards the edges of the county. This leaves Northampton, Kettering and Wellingborough as relatively central locations. The local authority venues in these locations are as follows:
- Kettering: Bowling Green Road
 - Northampton: The Guildhall, One Angel Square, County Hall
 - Wellingborough: Swanspool House

- 5.6 All five of these venues provide the standard of accessibility associated with local authority premises. All have either on-site parking or public parking in the immediate vicinity. All except One Angel Square have one room that is large enough to accommodate a Panel meeting with social distancing measures: more rooms at all five venues will become available for Panel meetings when social distancing ceases to be necessary.
- 5.7 The Panel has specified the ability to webcast as its top priority for future meetings. The Panel Secretariat has identified a technical solution for webcasting, using some of the webcasting equipment that was used to webcast Panel meetings up to March 2020 to stream to YouTube through a Zoom session. The only on-site technology required for this approach is an internet connection and microphones in the meeting room. This would normally be available at all five local authority venues discussed above, although the Panel Secretariat was advised at the end of July 2021 that the microphone system in the council chamber at Bowling Green Road, Kettering, was not working at that point.
- 5.8 The considerations detailed in paragraphs 5.5 – 5.7 above, plus the availability of specific venues, have resulted in the use of The Guildhall for the current Panel meeting. This will provide an opportunity to test the technical solution for webcasting in real life.
- 5.9 Subject to the experience of the current meeting it is proposed that the Panel may then wish to consider identifying the local authority venues in Northampton as the normal location for its meetings. This option arguably represents the best fit for the priorities identified by the Panel. However, this is ultimately a matter for the Panel to determine.

Remuneration of independent co-opted Panel members

- 5.10 All members of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel are currently able to claim expenses for activities connected with their roles according to a set Member Expenses Scheme. The cost of such expenses is met from 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.
- 5.11 The previous Panel agreed at its final meeting on 24th March 2021 to recommend that the Panel appointed for 2021/22 should consider whether there should be additional remuneration for Panel members in future. In practice, this focusses on the question of whether independent co-opted members of the Panel should receive specific remuneration, given that councillor members' work on the Panel is covered by the basic allowance paid to all councillors by their respective local authorities. Different views on this question were expressed by members at the meeting in March 2021; in any case it was recognised that the previous Panel was not in a position to pursue the matter further at that point.
- 5.12 The potential to introduce an allowance for independent co-opted members was revisited by the current Panel at its meeting on 17th June 2021 during discussion of its work programme and operating arrangements. The Panel noted that the Scheme of Allowances adopted by West Northamptonshire Council includes the provision that "An allowance of £500 will be paid to the co-optee(s) to the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel" (for reference, the North

Northamptonshire Council Scheme of Allowances also provides for remuneration of co-opted members of committees). This provision and the size of the allowance was recommended by an Independent Remuneration Panel. The resulting situation effectively answers questions that the Panel would otherwise need to raise with the constituent authorities, concerning their position on the principal of introducing specific remuneration for independent co-opted members and the level at which this remuneration should be set.

- 5.13 Since the previous Panel meeting the Panel Secretariat has also carried out further research into approaches to remuneration taken by other panels. Approaches differ across all panels but include various examples of panels that already pay allowances to some or all of their members: for example, the panels for Cheshire, Essex, Greater Manchester, Hampshire, Kent, North Yorkshire, Warwickshire and West Yorkshire. These panels' experiences also indicate that there is no issue with the principal of using Police & Crime Panel grant funding to cover the cost of allowances for panel members.
- 5.14 Taking into account the factors set out in paragraphs 5.12 – 5.13 above the Panel is invited to agree that independent co-opted members should be paid an annual allowance of £500 from 2021/22, subject to confirmation of the provision of Police & Crime Panel grant funding to the host authority.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1 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 can claim from the Home Office for the purpose of maintaining a panel for the Northamptonshire Police area. The host authority for the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel was able to claim up to £64,340 in grant funding for 2020/21 (consisting of up to £53,300 for administration and up to £11,040 for member expenses). It is anticipated that the same will apply for 2021/22, subject to receipt of confirmation from the Home Office.

6.2 Legal

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

6.3 Risk

- 6.3.1 The Panel should ensure that its work programme and operating arrangements enable 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 was unfocussed, that included too much business to be realistically deliverable, or that was not sufficiently flexible. 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.

7. Background Papers

Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011

Policing & Crime Act 2017

Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Rules of Procedure