

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Minutes of a meeting of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel held at the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, St Giles Street, Northampton NN1 1DE on Thursday 9 September 2021 at 1.00 pm.

Present Councillor Gill Mercer (Chair)
 Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage (Vice-Chair)
 Councillor Jon-Paul Carr
 Councillor Dorothy Maxwell
 Councillor Zoe McGhee
 Councillor Ken Pritchard
 Councillor David Smith
 Councillor Winston Strachan
 Miss Pauline Woodhouse

Also in attendance Stephen Mold, Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner
 John Beckerleg, Chair, Joint Independent Audit Committee
 Deborah Denton, Joint Head of Communications, Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner
 James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, West Northamptonshire Council
 Helen King, Chief Finance Officer, Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner
 Nicci Marzec, Director for Early Intervention, Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer, Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner
 Stuart McCartney, Governance & Accountability Manager, Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

There were three members of the public in attendance.

12. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Mrs Anita Shields.

13. Notification of requests from members of the public to address the meeting

None received.

14. Declarations of Interest

None declared.

15. Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting and made the following points:

- It had been intended to webcast the meeting live but technical difficulties had prevented this. The issue of webcasting could be discussed further when the Panel considered its work programme.

- Since the previous Panel meeting Mr Robert Mehaffy had resigned as an independent co-opted member. Mr Mehaffy had been a Panel member since 5th February 2019 and thanks were expressed to him for his work. The Panel still had two independent co-opted members as required, which meant there was not an immediate need to go out to recruitment. It was open to the Panel to discuss this matter further at the current meeting if it wished to do so.
- Panel members had been advised of the opportunity to attend the annual national conference for Police, Fire & Crime panels on 2nd November 2021. The AGM of the National Association of Police, Fire & Crime Panels normally took place at the conference but was being held as a separate remote meeting this year. The Chair would again stand for the National Association Executive Committee.
- The government had just begun a consultation on giving Police & Crime Commissioners greater general powers of competence, which Panel members may wish to consider and respond to individually.

16. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that: the minutes of the Police, Fire & Crime Panel meeting held on 17th June 2021 be agreed.

Matters arising from the minutes

18/21 Police & Crime Plan Delivery Update

The Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC) advised that the provision of personal alarms for all girls in years 12-13 in the county had been incorporated in a bid for funding from round three of the Safer Streets initiative. The outcome of the bid should be known in November 2021.

07-17/06/2021 Introduction to the PFCC's Priorities and Challenges

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager advised that requested information on the demographic make-up of recent intakes of recruits to Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service had been received from the Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) on the previous day and would be circulated to Panel members as soon as possible.

17. **Fire & Rescue Plan Delivery Update**

The PFCC presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- Work to develop joint working between Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) was continuing. Darby House and the new joint garage facility in the county exemplified this approach.
- Changes to outdated NFRS facilities were also progressing, although this involved some challenges such as issues that had help up plans connected with the disposal of Kettering Police Station.
- Significant investment was planned in the next year in NFRS's digital and technology capacity.

- He was proud of the work done to enable additional investment in NFRS staffing. NFRS had recently welcomed 10 transferees in addition to 20 new recruits taken on earlier in the year.
- The Arson Task Force had done good work on fire safety assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Chief Fire Officer had published his annual report in the previous month, which highlighted the good work done by NFRS personnel during the pandemic, including carrying out almost 1,100 shifts with the East Midlands Ambulance Service and almost 3,000 pharmacy deliveries. The PFCC thanked all emergency services personnel for their efforts.

The Panel considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- It was questioned whether NFRS planned to install throwlines at any sites in North Northamptonshire in addition to those in West Northamptonshire.
- Throwline boards needed to be protected appropriately from the risk of vandalism.
- It could be beneficial for officers from NFRS, Northamptonshire Police and local authority licensing functions to carry out joint inspection visits to licensed premises.
- There was a risk resulting from licensing inspections being put on-hold during lockdown. It was questioned what action could be taken now to address this.
- Licensees were responsible for ensuring that appropriate fire safety arrangements were in place on their premises.
- It was questioned how decisions on the procurement of equipment for NFRS were informed by feedback from frontline officers.
- The PFCC was questioned about how he was supporting NFRS to carry out home fire safety checks, given the added importance of this function when more people were working from home.
- Reassurance was sought that the PFCC was monitoring NFRS's performance on response times robustly and that there was sufficient focus on both rural and urban areas.

The PFCC made the following additional points during the course of discussion:

- Throwlines had been installed at locations where there was the highest risk. He would like to roll out provision further, funded by external grants as far as possible.
- Throwline installations needed to be easily accessible, which made it more difficult to protect them from vandalism. Appealing to people's better nature was the way to reduce this risk.
- Various activity had taken place in Northamptonshire to address fly-tipping. A pilot project had been run in rural areas and opportunities to extend this were now being explored. Covert cameras had also been used to support action by local authorities under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

- The relevant organisations ideally would co-ordinate inspection visits to licensed premises but this involved various challenges in practice. He had challenged the force and NFRS to improve internal co-ordination, for example, by NFRS bringing together different functions supporting fire prevention.
- There was now a focus on restoring normal continuity in relation to licensing inspections. However, it was important to recognise the number of premises in the county and that NFRS was not the only organisation involved in the licensing process.
- The Chief Fire Officer had regular engagement meetings with NFRS personnel and there were also other opportunities for staff members to feed back comments through the command structure. NFRS should have good communication with frontline staff members to be a successful organisation: the findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry reinforced this principle.
- An area that currently concerned him was houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in the county. Many HMOs were unregistered, which increased the risks involved. This issue needed to be taken into account when considering how NFRS used its overall resources and he provided challenge to the Chief Fire Officer on this matter.
- NFRS carried out several thousand home fire safety checks in normal times prior to the pandemic. He would like to return to this level of activity but it needed to be done in a sensible way that did not expose firefighters to an excessive level of risk from COVID-19. In this context, he also welcomed changes to the NHS app concerning self-isolation notifications. Home fire safety checks were well-received by residents and NFRS should aim to resume its previous approach.
- He regularly monitored NFRS response times. The average response time for all incidents had decreased from 11 minutes 36 seconds before the governance transfer to 10 minutes 10 seconds afterwards. The Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) set a target of 10 minutes. NFRS was achieving this for responses to fires but exceeding it in other areas. Response capacity had been affected by self-isolation notifications over the summer.
- There were 8 whole time fire stations in the county, which were primarily located in urban areas. This led to a better response time in urban than rural areas, which reflected the relative level of risk. The same level of cover could not be provided in all areas of the county. Different options needed to be considered for rural areas, such as the use of on-call firefighters.
- His long term aim was to bring together the force and NFRS control rooms but there was not currently a system that could provide all of the necessary functionality. The call handling and command and despatch system being procured by NFRS and Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service represented a shorter term solution.

RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the report.

18. **Police & Crime Plan Delivery Update**

The PFCC presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- Significant work had been done on the force's performance and efficiency and he now wanted to see this reflected in the outcomes it achieved.
- The work of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) Team was now complemented by four specialist Domestic Abuse Support Officers, who supported people involved in incidents classified as low level.
- He had provided additional resources to enhance the force's response to people with mental health needs.
- He supported the force to increase its focus on neighbourhood policing and was proud of the increased number of officers now working in this area. New liveried vehicles that had been introduced would also help to increase the force's visibility in the community.
- A further successful bid had been made to the national Safer Streets fund.
- The Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera network in Northamptonshire had been doubled in size and had resulted in 340 recent arrests.
- The report included information from the PFCC's Performance Framework giving an assessment of progress on some of the priority areas in the Police & Crime Plan.

The Panel considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- Concern was raised that there was still not sufficient visible policing in the county: St George ward in Northampton and Kingswood ward in Corby were given as examples. It was argued that a dedicated Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) in St George was needed to provide a visible police presence and help to address anti-social behaviour.
- The aim of increasing neighbourhood policing should not involve officers just going out in police cars, which could cause them to miss out on local intelligence.
- Feedback obtained from young people at a youth club in Corby was that they were reluctant to speak to detached youth workers as they were not known locally and were suspected of being undercover police officers. The PFCC should consider making more use of voluntary youth workers already in the area: employing them could build on existing working relationships.
- County lines crime occurred across the county and it should be apparent what was happening in cases when a young person went away for some time and then reappeared with new clothes or a new phone. Further information was sought as to whether the force had a specific team for county lines who local elected representatives could work with on this matter.
- People taking action in the community against county lines needed to be confident that statutory organisations were also playing their part.

- Written information had been circulated to residents in Northampton about neighbourhood police officers and PCSOs.
- The Accountability Board meeting in February 2021 had discussed the need to deliver policing differently in some areas of the county to address issues such as knife crime. However, knife crime was an issue that could not be dealt with solely by the force but needed a joined up approach by relevant organisations.
- Organisations working with young people needed to reach out to them in the right way, including making use of technology, establishing a relationship based on trust, and engaging them in a conversation in order to address an issue like county lines crime.
- There was a role for parents in countering issues such as drug related crime to support work done by the police and other relevant organisations such as schools.
- Concern was raised that Northamptonshire was an outlier in relation to childhood sexual offences, although the complexity of this issue was also recognised.
- The additional £240,000 allocated by the PFCC to substance misuse treatment and recovery services in the current year was welcome but further information was sought about how the outcomes produced by this funding were measured.
- Further information was sought about the implications for Northamptonshire of the government's new Beating Crime Plan.
- The PFCC was questioned about whether a recent victim satisfaction survey involved a sufficiently large number of people to be representative.
- Concern was raised that modern slavery was increasing in Northamptonshire and further information was sought about how robustly the force was responding to cases and additional action that might be taken to address a negative trend.
- The PFCC was questioned about what action could be taken to clear the backlog of court cases affecting Northamptonshire.

The PFCC made the following additional points during the course of discussion:

- Enhancing visible policing in Northamptonshire was still a work in progress. The force had been set a target for the percentage of officers' time spent outside of a police station and had not yet achieved this. The PFCC would continue to hold the Chief Constable to account on this matter and residents' perceptions could help to inform the PFCC's view of performance.
- Police officers should get into the local community when outside the station: as an example, consideration was being given to officers using scooters. At the same time, the way in which location monitoring was used should respect officers' intelligence and ability to manage their work effectively.
- The scheme to make homes on the Hemmingwell estate in Wellingborough supported by Safer Streets funding would cover all types of homes, including those in private ownership.
- He intended to recruit additional youth workers provided that the necessary funding could be confirmed. His aim was to have a youth team attached to each

neighbourhood policing team in the county. This would involve an increase from 11 to 18 youth workers.

- Councillors should contact their local neighbourhood policing team about an issue such as county lines crime.
- Issues related to drugs could not be addressed with enforcement alone. Relevant organisations needed to adopt a joined up approach and he challenged councillors to play their part in achieving this. There was also a responsibility on the wider community to recognise that using drugs contributed to county lines drug dealing that could endanger young people.
- The force was now a stronger organisation than it was a year ago but its ability to deal with particular challenges still needed to be seen in the context of the demands on its overall capacity. In the last year the force had received 310,000 calls and had attended 190,000 incidents, with a strength of 1,400 officers.
- The Youth Team had conducted a survey that had identified that young people's top three priorities relating to community safety in Northamptonshire were improving their surroundings, limiting drugs and getting rid of gangs and associated violence. This was an example of engaging young people in work on community safety.
- Substance to Solution had been commissioned to deliver a range of out of court disposals for low level offenders involved in substance misuse, using £240,000 funding from the OPFCC and the local authority treatment budget. He was not entirely satisfied with the outcomes delivered by this work and needed to provide challenge back on this together with the local authorities.
- He had been involved in the development of the Beating Crime Plan and his Police & Crime Plan already reflected key elements of it.
- The force's current clear up rate was over 12 per cent, although this needed to be contextualised appropriately. The overall crime rate in Northamptonshire had increased by 3 per cent but the number of victims of crime had decreased by 3,500 for the same period. This situation gave the PFCC confidence that the force's direction of travel was right and that there was a good understanding of the detail behind headline performance figures. As PFCC he had taken care not to set arbitrary targets that could produce unhelpful outcomes.
- The sample size for the recent victim satisfaction survey had been statistically relevant. The OPFCC could not compel people to reply and a lower response rate suggested satisfaction rather than dissatisfaction with services.
- He was challenging the Chief Constable to ensure that the force responded effectively to modern slavery. The PFCC had been questioned by some when he had included this in his Police & Crime Plan as a focus area. It was a difficult issue to address but more was now being done in Northamptonshire than in the past.
- Northamptonshire had made significant progress in addressing the backlog of court cases. In August 2019 it had been in 41st position nationally in relation to the number of magistrates court cases waiting to be heard. It had since improved to sixth position and had been first for the last quarter. Good work had been done on areas such as the quality of case files. This had resulted in Northamptonshire

being in first position nationally in the last quarter for the number of guilty pleas made in magistrates courts at the first hearing stage. He had supported this improvement work as Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board. However, pressures on court capacity was a national issue and he encouraged councillors to continue to highlight it to the local MPs.

The Director for Early Intervention provided additional information in response to points raised by members during the course of discussion as follows:

- The youth workers funded by the OPFCC were intended to complement other provision in the county not to duplicate it. They needed to be used as effectively as possible as 11-18 youth workers was not a large number for the whole county. It was also recognised that young people would go to different places for different needs. There would be open recruitment to the new posts, although the individuals appointed would be required to work across all parts of the county.
- There was not one organisation that was solely responsible for addressing county lines, given that it could involve issues such as safeguarding in relation to young people who went missing as well as policing.

RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the report.

19. **Fire & Rescue Authority Budget Update**

The PFCC presented the report setting out the latest forecast outturn position, highlighting the following points:

- The current forecast outturn was for an overspend of £27,000, which represented 0.01 per cent of the budget.
- There remained base budget challenges in the medium term.

The Panel considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The PFCC was questioned as to whether he was satisfied with progress made to date towards the development of a sustainable capital programme.
- Further information was sought about the thinking behind the level of reserves currently held by the Fire & Rescue Authority and the planned reduction in general reserves from £3m to £2m in 2021/22.
- The fact that the government was proposing to make the PFCC governance model the national standard reflected well on what had been done in Northamptonshire. The governance transfer had benefitted NFRS.

The PFCC made the following points during the course of discussion:

- Significant progress had been towards putting the capital programme in a sustainable position, although there continued to be challenges.
- He had heard that when the Home Office considered decisions on Fire & Rescue service matters they thought about the effect on Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire. It was welcome that Northamptonshire's situation was prominent in future planning.

- He hoped that when the government brought forward legislation on Fire & Rescue services it would change the funding provided to Northamptonshire. The Chief Finance Officer was working to maximise what was available from other sources, such as Section 106 funding. The enabling services approach also helped to identify new ways of using resources as effectively as possible.

The Chief Finance Officer provided additional information in response to points raised by members during the course of discussion as follows:

- NFRS required a relatively large amount of capital stock and there was a challenge in balancing affordability with the timely delivery of new items. The capital programme had been subject to two reviews in 2021/22 as well as monthly monitoring.
- £99,000 in underspends from 2020/21 had been ring-fenced to support staff relocation costs connected with the move to Darby House and two areas of prevention activity that could not be delivered in the previous financial year.
- The level of reserves held by the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority was the lowest in the country by far. General reserves would be maintained at £2m to provide a sensible buffer. Other reserves were at the planned level.
- The future financial shortfall identified in the medium term financial plan to 2025/26 represented the best estimate at the current time. Funding was not projected to keep pace with requirements. The OPFCC continued to make a case for additional resources to the government at the same time as identifying savings and alternative options in case of need.
- Ideally general reserves would be maintained at £3m. The development of the 2021/22 budget had planned for general reserves at £2m. The Home Office had then provided additional resources to maintain reserves at the higher level but only for one year. This explained the timing of the change.

RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the report.

20. Policing Budget Update

The PFCC presented the report setting out the latest forecast outturn position, highlighting the following points:

- The current forecast outturn was for an overspend of £146,000, which represented 0.1 per cent of the budget. It was expected that this would be managed down to a small underspend by the end of the financial year.
- The anticipated review of the police funding formula had not yet started and he would continue to push for this.

The Panel considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The PFCC was questioned whether a successful outcome from the police funding formula review would mean he would be in a position not to increase the precept.

- The situation in Northamptonshire demonstrated the advantages of bringing emergency services together under a single governance structure. The PFCC was urged to encourage the government also to move in this direction with ambulance services.
- Northamptonshire residents were experiencing unacceptable waiting times for ambulances and the county seemed to have a lower priority than other areas in the East Midlands.

In response to a question the Chief Finance Officer advised that the current forecast underspend on force collaboration budgets related to the regional Emergency Services Network (ESN) team; it was not an underspend on the overall ESN project.

The PFCC made the following points during the course of discussion:

- He was on the ESN project board and was confident that the right management was now in-place. The project should be delivered in 2021/22. The most significant pressure relating to the overall ESN project was the cost of continuing to run the Airwave Network for an interim period. The sale of the Airwave spectrum would eventually produce a large part of the funding for ESN.
- The forecast overspend on the force control room budget reflected that staff were recruited in advance of need, which could result in an overspend if turnover was less than was anticipated. He was not concerned by this position as it did not have a negative effect on public safety.
- It was likely that he would seek to increase the police precept by the rate of inflation even if the police funding formula review produced additional resources for Northamptonshire. Freezing the precept would risk creating pressures in future. It would also not provide resources for planned projects and legacy issues that needed to be addressed, such as improving NFRS buildings.
- Establishing a single governance model for police, fire & rescue and ambulance services would involve addressing some very complex challenges. It would also not have an impact without other relevant factors being addressed, such as the effect of pressures in Accident & Emergency departments on ambulance service response times. Having an elected NHS commissioner could help to deal with the overall situation.

RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the report.

21. **Joint Independent Audit Committee Annual Report 2020/21**

The PFCC commented that the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) supported the effective operation of the OPFCC and the two services, whilst also assisting him to hold to account the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer. It was good practice to bring the JIAC's Annual Report to the Panel.

The Chair of the JIAC then presented the Annual Report and highlighted the following points:

- The JIAC had reviewed its terms of reference in 2020/21. These followed national guidance and it was not proposed to make any changes to them at this point.

- Poor performance by external audit was a key issue that had been highlighted by the JIAC's work in the past year. Members of the public should expect to be able to see audited accounts at the appropriate time. The national approach to external audit meant that there was limited scope for local action to address current issues.
- The JIAC had welcomed the decision that services delivered through the Multi-Force Shared Services (MFSS) partnership would be brought back in-house and delivered jointly for the force and NFRS. The phased transition proposed represented a positive approach. The change would involve challenges and the JIAC would monitor the progress made.
- The JIAC had been pleased with the way that the force and NFRS were beginning to work together. He had been involved in the development of the legislation supporting joint working and it was good to see Northamptonshire making use of the opportunities it provided.
- He commended the officers who supported the JIAC's work for their open and transparent approach. He also particularly commended the way in which the finance teams and statutory officers had dealt with challenges experienced during the year resulting from uncertainty about the timing of external audits.

The Panel considered the Annual Report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The decision to bring shared services back in-house was welcomed.
- The detailed oversight carried out by the JIAC gave the Panel confidence.
- Delays in the completion of external audits were also causing significant issues for local authorities but there seemed to be no way to address this. It was questioned whether a more locally-led approach to external audit would provide more control.
- The JIAC was a relatively small body and reassurance was sought that all members were able to make a full contribution to its work.
- It was questioned whether members of the public could attend JIAC meetings.
- It was questioned what action was being taken in response to concerns about the quality of some external audit work.

The Chair of the JIAC made the following additional points during the course of discussion:

- The next national external audit tendering process was likely to involve some strong challenge about the respective benefits of a collective or local approach.
- The JIAC was a manageable size and members worked both in- and outside its formal meetings. Before the COVID-19 pandemic the JIAC had met at force headquarters. It welcomed public attendance and had a process for members of the public to ask questions at JIAC meetings. Information about the JIAC was available on the web.
- The JIAC had sought to broaden its skills base in the latest round of recruitment carried out in 2019.

- Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) had provided some assistance to Northamptonshire on negotiating with external auditors about fees and timescales for the completion of work. He considered that audit fees should be linked more to the quality of work and that authorities were not very well served by PSAA in this respect.

The Chief Finance Officer provided additional information in response to points raised by members during the course of discussion as follows:

- PSAA was due to commission the next national external audit period in March 2022. The Chief Finance Officer was looking at future options for Northamptonshire, including speaking with counterparts who had not been part of the national scheme in the current five-year period.
- The PFCC had made representations to the external auditor about the timing of the latest audits, which had resulted in the NFRS audit being moved forward to autumn 2021. However, the force audit was not due to take place until spring 2022.
- Voice was not subject to arrangements with the PSAA and the OPFCC had confirmed that it could use an alternative external auditor.
- The scale fees for the force and NFRS audits were £45,000 and £25,000 respectively. The external auditor was seeking to increase these fees by £6,000 and £10,000 for Northamptonshire and its counterparts were being asked to pay even more.

[Councillor Smith left the meeting during the preceding discussion].

The Chair thanked the Chair of the JIAC for his attendance. The PFCC went on to thank the Chair and other JIAC members for their previous work, which had provided challenge and counsel that was very helpful for the PFCC.

RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the Joint Independent Audit Committee Annual Report 2020/21.

22. **Police, Fire & Crime Panel Work Programme 2021/22**

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager presented the report setting out the latest version of the Panel's work programme and specific matters relating to the operation of the Panel, highlighting the following points:

- The Panel was invited to review and agree or amend the work programme as considered necessary.
- The Panel had agreed that its work programme should include a workshop session open to all members on the 2021/22 Police and Fire & Rescue Authority budget positions. The OPFCC proposed that this session take place on 13th October 2021. The Panel should consider this date and whether the session would take place in-person or as a remote meeting.
- The report proposed that the Panel should agree to use local authority venues in Northampton as the normal location for its meetings. This was based on a technical solution for webcasting that had not worked at the current meeting, for

which apologies were offered. It was hoped that issues could be resolved with further investigation. The Panel still needed to determine where its future meetings would take place.

- The report provided further information on the question of introducing remuneration for independent co-opted members, confirming that there were other examples of other panels that took this approach using the Home Office Police & Crime Panel grant. The provision of grant funding in 2021/22 had been confirmed. The Panel should determine how it wished to proceed on this matter.

The Panel considered the report and members made the following points concerning the work programme during the course of discussion:

- It was hoped that the Panel would be able to consider the PFCC's draft Police & Crime Plan and draft Fire & Rescue Plan in December 2021 as currently scheduled, particularly as putting this back would result in a large amount of business for the meeting in February 2022.
- The requested visit to Darby House for Panel members should be combined with one of the other proposed briefing sessions.
- Some members were not available to attend a workshop session on 13th October 2021. A new date should be sought. It would also be helpful for members to have the option of participating remotely or in-person.
- The Panel should ensure that it did receive a report on action being taken in Northamptonshire to respond to the outcomes of the Kerlake Report and the Public Inquiry into the Manchester Arena terror attack.

The PFCC advised that he did not want to give an absolute commitment that his new draft plans would be presented to the Panel in December. There were risks that could affect this, although work was underway and the new plans would be an evolution of previous ones.

The Panel considered the locations to be used for its future meetings and members raised the following points during the course of discussion:

- Northampton or Wellingborough would be the best locations. The report identified Kettering as a possible location but it was arguably not central enough in the county to be considered.
- Northampton still seemed to represent the best fit for the priorities identified by the Panel provided that the proposed webcasting solution could be made to work.

The Panel then considered the question of introducing remuneration for independent co-opted members. Various councillor members supported introducing a small allowance, highlighting the disparity that councillors received a basic allowance for carrying out their role including as Panel members; that participating in Panel meetings and other activity involved commitment; and that an allowance could help to attract and retain good Panel members. The Chair also noted that Home Office representatives emphasised that the Police & Crime Panel grant could be discontinued in future if panels did not make full use of it.

Councillor Pritchard asked for it to be recorded that he did not support remuneration for Panel members given that there were comparable roles, such as acting as a magistrate, that were carried out on a voluntary basis.

RESOLVED that:

- a) **The Panel requests that the planned workshop session on the 2021/22 Police and Fire & Rescue budget positions be held in-person at Darby House, Wellingborough, with an option for members to join remotely, on a date to be confirmed following the current meeting.**
- b) **The Panel agrees to use local authority venues in Northampton as the normal location for Panel meetings.**
- c) **The Panel 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.**
- d) **The Panel endorses the outline work programme for 2021/22.**

23. Complaints and Conduct Matters Update

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager presented the report providing an overview of complaints and conduct matters for the period from January – August 2021. The Panel was advised that one new complaint had been recorded during this period and had been subject to Informal Resolution by the Panel's Complaints Sub Committee in March 2021. There were no other outstanding complaints or conduct matters.

The Panel considered the report. The Democratic Services Assistant Manager provided additional information in response to questions from members as follows:

- The membership of the Complaints Sub Committee for 2021/22 consisted of Councillors Pritchard, Maxwell and Roberts, with Councillor Gonzalez De Savage as a substitute; Councillor Strachan, with Councillor McGhee as a substitute; and Mrs Shields and Miss Woodhouse, acting as a pool.
- The Panel had delegated to the host authority's Monitoring Officer the functions of receiving, recording and referring complaints. This included determining whether a purported complaint qualified to be recorded or, for example, was considered not actually to relate to the conduct of the PFCC.
- The Complaints Sub Committee could not investigate a complaint as part of the Informal Resolution process but did consider information provided by both parties.
- The Complaints Sub Committee could request further information on a complaint from the PFCC as part of the Informal Resolution process. It was aimed to complete Informal Resolution at a single meeting where possible, but there was precedent for the Sub Committee considering a complaint across two meetings where further information had been requested.

The PFCC made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The Complaints Sub Committee should feel able to request further information if this was thought to be necessary when it was carrying out Informal Resolution of a complaint.
- The greater role given to Police & Crime commissioners in the police complaints process increased the risk that dissatisfaction with the force could lead to complaints about the PFCC. The OPFCC also had to deal with some enquirers who just sought to take up time.

RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the report.

24. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 4.50 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____