

# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

## REPORT TO THE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

9 AUGUST 2022

Report Title	Review of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Annual Report for 2021/22
Report Author	James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, West Northamptonshire Council <a href="mailto:James.edmunds@westnorthants.gov.uk">James.edmunds@westnorthants.gov.uk</a>

### 1. Purpose of Report

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- 1.1. The report is intended to set out the results of the review by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Annual Report for 2021/22.

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 The Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire is required to publish an Annual Report on their activity and their progress with the delivery of key strategic outcomes in the previous year. The Annual Report must be reviewed by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel, resulting in the production of a report to the Commissioner.

### 3. Recommendations

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- 3.1 It is recommended that the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire:
- a) Considers this report by the Police, Fire & Crime Panel arising from its review of his Annual Report for 2021/22 carried out in accordance with the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 28(4).
  - b) Provides the Panel with a response to this report and its recommendations set out in section 6 in accordance with the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 12 Paragraph 4(a).
- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation(s) – The recommendations are required to complete the Panel's review of the Annual Report for 2021/22 published by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner, in accordance with the Panel's statutory responsibilities.

## **4. Report Background**

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- 4.1 Sections 12 and 28 of the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 specify that a Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) must produce an annual report. The annual report must report on:
- a) the exercise of the PCC's functions in the previous financial year, and
  - b) the progress which has been made in the financial year in meeting the police and crime objectives in the Police & Crime Plan.
- 4.2 The PCC must send an annual report to the relevant Police & Crime panel as soon as practicable after it is produced.
- 4.3 The Police & Crime panel must arrange a public meeting of the panel to be held as soon as practicable after the panel is sent the annual report.
- 4.4 The PCC must attend the panel meeting to present the report and to answer such questions from the panel about it as panel members think appropriate.
- 4.5 The panel must review the annual report and make a report or recommendations on it to the PCC. The report or recommendations of the panel must be published. The PCC must provide a response to the panel and must also publish that response.
- 4.6 Local Government Association (LGA) guidance for Police & Crime panels on policing and fire governance advises that scrutiny of the annual report should focus on the following areas:
- understanding whether the objectives set out in the Police & Crime Plan have been met
  - using panel members' own insight and independently gathered evidence to evaluate whether the PCC's conclusions on this matter are robust, and
  - supporting the PCC to hold the chief constable to account on operational delivery.

## **5. Review of the Annual Report**

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- 5.1 The Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel met in public on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022 to review the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Annual Report for 2021/22. The meeting was webcast live and a recording is available to view at: [West Northamptonshire Council - YouTube](#).
- 5.2 In presenting the Annual Report the Commissioner emphasised that although life was now returning to something like normality after the COVID-19 pandemic it was important not to lose sight of the experience gained during this period. His role included supporting innovation that enhanced effectiveness and there had been good examples of this in Northamptonshire during the past year. £2.5 million funding had been secured from the Safer Streets Fund and the government had praised work being done in the county. Northamptonshire was also seen as a hub for innovation in relation to policing and the Fire & Rescue service. The Commissioner noted that he was responsible for holding to account the Chief Constable for the effectiveness of

Northamptonshire Police and crime data was a key tool for this. However, a properly contextualised view of such performance data needed to be taken, which was why it had not been included in the current Annual Report. The Commissioner was confident that the force had made good progress and he proposed to bring a new style of performance report to the Panel in 2022/23. The Commissioner concluded by thanking the team in the Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for their work in delivering the activity set out in the Annual Report.

- 5.3 The Panel then questioned the Commissioner about the position presented in the Annual Report, in the context of the objectives and focus areas identified in the Commissioner's Police, Fire & Crime Plan. The Panel considered the following matters:

**Robust enforcement – create a hostile environment for criminals**

- 5.4 A Panel member sought further information about how Safer Streets Funding had been used in Northamptonshire and the practical benefit this had produced. The Commissioner advised that funding had been used on the Hemmingwell estate in Wellingborough, in Northampton and in other parts of the county for purposes including the provision of CCTV and alleygating, for youth work and to fund the Safer Nights Out (SNO) van operating in Northampton. A second SNOvan for the north of the county would be provided if further funding was secured.

**Prevention and early intervention – divert young people from crime**

- 5.5 A Panel member referred to cases of young children being recruited by gangs to sell drugs and questioned the Commissioner on what was being done in Northamptonshire to address this, including the potential to do more engagement work in schools. The Commissioner responded that the only way to resolve issues relating to drugs completely was to end drug taking in society: the drugs trade would continue whilst it remained lucrative. In the meantime, a range of work was being done in Northamptonshire on this matter, including fitting new doors and security measures on properties on the Hemmingwell estate in Wellingborough using Safer Streets funding; securing £350,000 additional government investment in police officer recruitment to reflect the progress made in Northamptonshire; and work by the Adverse Childhood Experiences team to engage with young people about the dangers of getting involved in crime. Young people's involvement in crime could be linked to wider factors such as exclusion from education and relevant agencies needed to work together to produce an effective joined up response. Engagement activity should also take into account that young people spent more time with their families and in the local community than in school.
- 5.6 A Panel member emphasised the importance of joint working in supporting community safety, due to the complex nature of the issues that could be involved. Increased investment in social care should form a part of this, to reflect greater risks to vulnerable young people who might be living in a chaotic family environment. The Commissioner agreed the importance of effective joint working between relevant organisations, including local authorities and health organisations. Effective data-sharing between organisations was an issue that was not exciting but was crucial to success. A Panel member subsequently commented that financial pressures were a key factor that could cause young people to get involved in criminal activity if this seemed to be the only

way of making money to support themselves or their family. This issue would get worse if the current cost of living crisis was not addressed. All concerned should push for action on this. The Commissioner noted the wide-ranging impact of current economic pressures. He would do all that was possible to make Northamptonshire safer within this environment. Evidence on gang-related activity indicated that the majority of it was not financially-driven. A Panel member went on to welcome the emphasis on early intervention and youth work conveyed in the Annual Report.

### **Robust enforcement – tackle anti-social behaviour and hate crime**

- 5.7 A Panel member noted that the Annual Report referred to various initiatives underway in Northamptonshire directed at improving safety for women and girls, but questioned what assurances that the Commissioner had sought about their likely effectiveness. Further information was also sought about local responses to the issue of drink-spiking. The Commissioner highlighted Operation Kayak launched in 2021 as an example of specific action by Northamptonshire Police against predatory behaviour in the night-time economy, including drink-spiking. Other productive local initiatives included the Shout-Up project intended to counter sexual harassment in licensed premises; the Enough is Enough campaign encouraging men to challenge inappropriate behaviour towards women; and the SNOvan, which had received positive feedback from those it had helped. These initiatives reflected the commitment to making the night-time economy in Northamptonshire as safe as possible. The Commissioner also planned an initiative focussed on inappropriate behaviour by boys towards girls, which he had seen examples of when carrying out school visits.

### **Robust enforcement – increase accessibility and visibility in all communities**

- 5.8 The Panel considered progress on enhancing visible policing in Northamptonshire. A Panel member highlighted that the focus on safety in the night-time economy should not detract from the importance of the daytime economy and the need for more visible policing during the day. The Commissioner was subsequently challenged about whether the recruitment of additional police officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) was making a practical difference to visible policing in the county that would be seen by residents. The Commissioner advised that the amount of police activity during the daytime had increased. Information reported to him demonstrated that additional officers were deployed in Northamptonshire and were going out on patrol in the community. He could provide further information on this to the Panel. At the same time, it was necessary to recognise that Northamptonshire Police still only had 1,500 officers to cover the whole of the county. In response to further questions the Commissioner confirmed that there was a sponsored PCSO programme in Northamptonshire. He also highlighted the beat buses operated by the force as another means of enhancing visible local policing.

### **Transformation – increase engagement and participation**

- 5.9 A Panel member welcomed good work being done in the county but noted that the Annual Report appeared inward-looking. The importance both of engaging with different communities

and of learning from good practice relating to policing and community safety in other areas was emphasised. The Commissioner was sorry if the Annual Report gave the impression of being too inward-looking and challenged that this was actually the case in Northamptonshire. Significant attention was given to community engagement by both Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service. The Commissioner also emphasised that he was willing to consider and learn from good ideas wherever they occurred.

### **Transformation – ensure value for money**

- 5.10 A Panel member questioned whether the Commissioner was satisfied with the progress being made regarding disposal of unused properties. The Commissioner advised that he would be using an Estates Board meeting later that day to emphasise that the current position with some property disposals was not satisfactory. More progress needed to be made, whilst still getting good value. A Panel member subsequently questioned whether unused properties could be put to community use. The Commissioner responded that he was willing to consider all ideas. However, a former police station building was unlikely to be suitable for community use. Disposing of a high value building was also likely to generate more overall benefit for Northamptonshire residents than making it available for community use at a nominal cost.

### **Victims at the heart of justice and reducing offending – improve support to victims and witnesses**

- 5.11 A Panel member sought further information about how the Commissioner had used his role as Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board to improve the operation of the criminal justice system. The Commissioner advised that he was pleased with the continuing work by the Board but that there remained more to do. Northamptonshire was in a better position than some areas with regard to the backlog in court cases, although this had resulted in one of its judges being transferred to Nottinghamshire to assist with pressures there. There were always likely to be demand pressures on the judicial system. In response to a further question the Commissioner confirmed that victim support services in Northamptonshire were available to victims of historic crimes: there was no time limit on access to support, whilst Voice was also intended to act as a gateway to different services that were available.

### **Progress towards a safer Northamptonshire**

- 5.12 A Panel member questioned that the Annual Report did not include any comparative information on how community safety in Northamptonshire had changed at the end of 2021/22 compared to a year earlier, which would assist a member of the public to understand what progress was being made. The Commissioner responded that this Annual Report did not include crime data due to the risk of this becoming the sole focus of attention, as had been the case when the 2019/20 Annual Report was presented to the Panel. The Commissioner also reiterated the importance of crime data being viewed in context. Various examples illustrating this could be highlighted. Northamptonshire had the third highest monthly increase in crime in the country in April 2022, but over the last 12 months its performance had improved most of all forces in the country. The recent position partly reflected hard work done by the force on crime recording, including

the recording of secondary offences. Most forces nationally were currently seeing an increase in domestic abuse but there had been an 8% decrease in all domestic abuse crime in Northamptonshire and a 6% decrease in the volume of victims, which was reflected in the number of referrals to the Sunflower Centre. The Commissioner was concerned that Northamptonshire was an outlier in this way and needed to be satisfied about the reasons for this. There had been a recent increase in shoplifting offences in Northamptonshire but this was largely due to a single repeat offender who had been responsible for 40 offences representing 13% of the total number. The Commissioner assured the Panel that he had a good oversight of Northamptonshire Police's performance and that performance data was also published on his website. Performance improvements by the force over the past year should be recognised and the Commissioner expected them to be reflected in its next PEEL assessment. However, they should also be seen in the context that the force needed to continue to improve.

- 5.13 Panel members commented that the Annual Report was very focussed on policing and encouraged that more reference be made to Fire & Rescue in future. The Commissioner acknowledged this point, whilst also highlighting that Northamptonshire Police was a much larger organisation than Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service.

## **6. Outcomes of the Review**

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6.1 At the conclusion of discussion the Panel resolved:

- a) **To emphasise the importance of delivering the objective of increasing visible policing in Northamptonshire.**
- b) **To recommend that the work of Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service be given more prominence in future annual reports.**

## **7. Background Papers**

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Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011

Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Terms of Reference