

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

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Report Title	Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Work Programme 2021/22 and operating arrangements
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	08/06/2021
West S151 (for West and joint papers)	Martin Henry	07/06/2021

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 consider and agree its work programme for 2021/22 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 2021/22, including any specific areas or priorities for scrutiny, reports to be requested from the Police, Fire & 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 arrangements with regard to the following matters relating to the operation of the Panel:
- Location of Panel meetings
 - Participation in network groups: the East Midlands Police & Crime Panels Network and the National Association of the Police, Fire & Crime Panels.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel:
- a) Agrees the content of its work programme for 2021/22
 - b) Agrees the location(s) to be used for Panel meetings in 2021/22
 - c) Agrees to continue its membership of the East Midlands Police & Crime Panels Network for 2021/22.
 - d) Agrees to continue its membership of the National Association of Police, Fire & Crime Panels for 2021/22.
- 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 by establishing a work programme for the year; identifying where Panel meetings will be held; and agreeing the Panel’s membership of relevant information-sharing network groups.

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 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.

5. Issues and Choices

Work Programme 2021/22

- 5.1 An outline work programme for the Panel for 2021/22 is included with this report (at Appendix A). This incorporates statutory business outlined in paragraph 4.1 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 potential areas for consideration and briefing sessions that the previous Panel wished to bring to the attention of its successor.
- 5.2 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 for 2021/22 should be set by the current Panel. The work programme can be informed by input from a range of sources, including suggestions from the previous Panel, from individual Panel members and from the PFCC. The Panel should consider suggested topics from all sources on their merits, with a view to setting a work programme that reflects the Panel's remit, has the support of Panel members, is realistically deliverable within available resources and that has the potential to produce the most worthwhile outcomes.

Location for Panel meetings

- 5.3 The Panel should use the current meeting to consider and agree the location(s) for its meetings in 2021/22, taking account of relevant factors such as the expiry of legislation that previously permitted remote meetings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and any implications resulting from local government reorganisation in Northamptonshire.
- 5.4 Since it was established in 2012 the Panel has largely met at County Hall in Northampton. Panel members have found the use of a single, central location to be practically beneficial. Live webcasting has also been used at different times to enhance the visibility of Panel meetings. The Panel rotated its meetings between different locations across Northamptonshire during 2017/18 but ultimately concluded that this did not represent the best approach available to it.
- 5.5 The Panel now needs to decide the approach that it wishes to take for the resumption of physical meetings. It is open to the Panel to agree that it will seek to hold all of its meetings at one suitable location, similar to the approach that it took up to March 2020. This would be a legitimate choice as the Panel continues to serve the same 'constituency' as it has done since it was first established, which is the Northamptonshire Police area.
- 5.6 An alternative approach could be for the Panel to rotate its meetings between different locations. Options for this might include alternating meetings between locations in the North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council areas or even rotating meetings through different locations in each of the former district / borough council areas. When considering its preferred approach on this matter the Panel should have a clear view of the practical implications that may be connected with different options, of the outcomes that the Panel wishes to achieve and of the best way of achieving these.

Participation in the East Midlands Police & Crime Panels Network

- 5.7 The Panel has previously participated in the East Midlands Police & 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 & 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 sources of information and guidance on good practice and a 10% discount on the cost of any training activity purchased from FCA. The Panel is invited to consider whether to continue its membership of the Network for 2021/22. The cost of this is £400 plus VAT.

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

- 5.8 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 & 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 January 2020. The Panel is invited to consider whether to continue its membership for 2021/22.

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 is able to 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 (made up of £53,300 for administration and £11,040 for member expenses). This grant funding can be used to fund the provision of secretariat support for the Panel and to pay expenses incurred by members in carrying out their roles on the Panel. Membership of the East Midlands Police & Crime Panels Network is also a cost that is eligible to be covered from grant funding. It is anticipated that the Panel will seek to use local authority venues for its meetings and that these will be available free of charge, as the Panel is formally a joint committee of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire councils.

6.2 **Legal**

6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposal.

6.3 **Risk**

6.3.1 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.

7. Background Papers

Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011

Policing & Crime Act 2017

Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Rules of Procedure