

# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

24<sup>th</sup> March 2021

1.00pm

Remote meeting via Zoom

**James Edmunds**, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, Northamptonshire County Council, is managing this agenda. Tel. 07500 605276 E-mail: [jedmunds@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:jedmunds@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

## AGENDA

\* Papers enclosed > Papers to follow

Item	Subject	Page No.	Contact Officer & Tel No.
1.	Apologies for non-attendance	--	James Edmunds 07500 605276
2.	Notification of requests from members of the public to address the meeting. <i>NOTE: any requests to speak on an item on the agenda should be notified to the Chair (c/o the Committee Manager) before the meeting.</i>	--	
3.	Declaration of Members' Interests, if any. <i>Members are reminded that where they have an interest in any business to be considered at this meeting they must declare it in accordance with their respective Code of Conduct.</i>	--	
4.	Chair's announcements	--	
5.*	Minutes of the Police, Fire & Crime Panel meeting held on 3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021 <i>To agree the minutes of the previous meeting.</i>	5-18	James Edmunds 07500 605276
<b>SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE, FIRE &amp; CRIME COMMISSIONER</b>			
6.*	Responding to COVID-19 and the impact on policing and community safety in Northamptonshire <i>To consider and comment on the update.</i>	19-48	Stuart McCartney 0300 111 222
7.*	Operation of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's responsibilities relating to the police complaints system <i>To consider and comment on the update.</i>	49-52	Stuart McCartney 0300 111 222
8.*	Fire & Rescue Plan Delivery Update <i>To consider and comment on the update.</i>	53-64	Stuart McCartney 0300 111 222

Item	Subject	Page No.	Contact Officer & Tel No.
9.*	Police & Crime Plan Delivery Update <i>To consider and comment on the update.</i>	65-98	Stuart McCartney 0300 111 222
10.*	Fire & Rescue Authority Budget Update <i>To consider and comment on the report.</i>	99-104	Helen King 0300 111 222
11.*	Policing Budget Update <i>To consider and comment on the report.</i>	105-110	Helen King 0300 111 222

#### PANEL OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

12.*	Handover to the Police, Fire & Crime Panel for 2021/22 <i>To identify any points arising from recent experience that the Panel wishes to hand over to its successor.</i>	111-118	James Edmunds 07500 605276
13.*	Police, Fire & Crime Panel Meeting Dates 2021/22 <i>To agree proposed meeting dates.</i>	119-120	James Edmunds 07500 605276
14.*	Future use of Remote Meetings <i>To agree to make representations regarding the future use of remote meetings by Police, Fire &amp; Crime panels.</i>	121-124	James Edmunds 07500 605276

#### URGENT BUSINESS

**Urgent Business** Such other business which, by reasons of the special circumstances to be specified, the Chair is of the opinion is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration. (Members who wish to raise urgent business are requested to inform the Chair, via the Committee Manager, beforehand.)

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#### EXEMPT ITEMS

In respect of the following items the Chair may move the resolution set out below, on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information (information regarded as private for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1972) would be disclosed to them: The Panel is requested to resolve:

“That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act of the descriptions against each item would be disclosed to them”.

Item	Subject	Exemption Category	Page No.	Contact Officer & Tel No. (01604)

This information can be made available in other formats upon request. Please contact James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, Northamptonshire County Council, on Tel. 07500 605276 or E-mail: [jedmunds@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:jedmunds@northamptonshire.gov.uk).

Edwina Adefehinti, Proper Officer, Northamptonshire County Council  
16<sup>th</sup> March 2021

## Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel - Role and Operation

This section of the agenda papers is intended to provide further information on the role, operation and membership of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel.

### What is the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel?

The Panel is responsible for scrutinising and holding to account the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for the way in which the Commissioner delivers his responsibilities for setting the priorities and resources for Northamptonshire Police and for Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service as well as for supporting broader community safety activities in the county. The Panel is a joint body established collectively by each of the local authorities in the county, with Northamptonshire County Council acting as the host authority.

### Who are the members of the Police, Fire & Crime Panel?

The membership of the Panel consists of 10 councillors drawn from each of the local authorities in Northamptonshire according to a set allocation of places and 3 independent co-opted members drawn from the local community. The current membership is as follows:

Councillor Panel Members	Substitutes	Local Authority represented
Councillor Judy Caine	Councillor John McGhee	Corby Borough Council
Councillor Richard Auger	Councillor Kevin Parker	Daventry District Council
Councillor Gill Mercer	Councillor Steven North	East Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Ian Jelley	Councillor Lesley Thurland	Kettering Borough Council
Councillor Anna King Councillor Janice Duffy	Councillor Phil Larratt Councillor Jane Birch	Northampton Borough Council
Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage Councillor Winston Strachan	Councillor Chris Smith- Haynes Councillor Anjona Roy	Northamptonshire County Council
Councillor Ken Pritchard	Councillor Alice Kim Ord	South Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Martin Griffiths	Councillor Tom Partridge- Underwood	Borough Council of Wellingborough
<b>Independent Co-opted Members</b>		
Mr Robert Mehaffy		
Mrs Anita Shields		
Miss Pauline Woodhouse		

### When does the Police, Fire & Crime Panel meet?

The Panel has 5 scheduled meetings in 2020/21, although additional meetings may be called.

16 <sup>th</sup> July 2020	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021
24 <sup>th</sup> September 2020	17 <sup>th</sup> February 2021 (Reserve)
10 <sup>th</sup> December 2020	24 <sup>th</sup> March 2021

### How can I find out about what is being discussed at Police, Fire & Crime Panel meetings?

The agenda papers for Panel meetings are published 5 working days in advance and can be obtained from County Hall or downloaded from the Northamptonshire County Council website at: <http://cmis.northamptonshire.gov.uk/cm5live/>

### Can I take part in Police, Fire & Crime Panel meetings?

Panel meetings are webcast live on the Northamptonshire Democracy YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOtMXYPYYhvEHxYkCiUdtqw> enabling members of the public to listen to discussion. Members of the public may request to address the Panel or ask a question on any item on the agenda for a particular meeting. Anyone wishing to speak at a Panel meeting should notify the Panel Secretariat (contact details are given on the front page of this agenda) by 12 noon, two working days before the date of the meeting. Individuals addressing the Panel may speak for up to 3 minutes.

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**Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2021**  
**Remote Meeting via Zoom**  
**(Meeting held in public)**

PRESENT:-

Councillor Gill Mercer	East Northamptonshire Council (Chair)
Councillor Richard Auger	Daventry District Council [to Item 07/21]
Councillor Janice Duffy	Northampton Borough Council [to Item 07/21]
Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage	Northamptonshire County Council
Councillor Martin Griffiths	Borough Council of Wellingborough [to Item 08/21]
Councillor Ian Jelley	Kettering Borough Council [to Item 08/21]
Mr Robert Mehaffy	Independent Co-opted Member
Councillor Ken Pritchard	South Northamptonshire Council
Mrs Anita Shields	Independent Co-opted Member
Councillor Winston Strachan	Northamptonshire County Council
Miss Pauline Woodhouse	Independent Co-opted Member

Also in attendance for all or part of the meeting

Stephen Mold	Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC)
James Edmunds	Democratic Services Assistant Manager, Northamptonshire County 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
Sophia Nartey	Deputy Monitoring Officer, Northamptonshire County Council
Raj Sohal	Democracy Officer, Northamptonshire County Council

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm

01/21 Apologies for non-attendance

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillor Caine (Corby Borough Council).

02/21 Notification of requests from members of the public to address the meeting

None received.

03/21 Declaration of Members' Interests

None declared.

04/21 Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting.

05/21 Minutes of the Police, Fire & Crime Panel meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020

**RESOLVED that: the minutes of the Police, Fire & Crime Panel meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 be agreed.**

Matters arising from the minutes

*77/20(a) Police & Crime Plan Delivery Update*

The Chair encouraged the PFCC to continue to provide the Panel with updates on efforts to address the current backlog of court cases affecting Northamptonshire.

*80/20 Future Operation of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel*

The Chair advised that she had written to the leaders and chief executives of the North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire authorities on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021 setting out the Panel's comments regarding future support arrangements following local government reorganisation. The Chief Executive of North Northamptonshire Council had replied to advise that future arrangements for the Panel were being considered by Constitution Task & Finish groups in the north and west. Feedback would be given to the Panel once decisions had been made.

06/21 Proposed Police Precept 2021/22

The PFCC introduced the report (copies of which had previously been circulated), highlighting the following points:

- The proposed Police precept and budget were based on an increase in the precept of £13 per year for Band D Council Tax.
- Investment in frontline policing had been a key priority throughout his term and the proposed budget would continue to deliver this and build on recent improvements to Northamptonshire Police.
- He considered that the proposed budget would also provide value for money and would reflect the views of local residents, given that 71% of consultees had said that they would be prepared to pay more for policing.
- The proposed budget would provide for the cost of an additional 140 officers recruited in the past two years and 76 officers in 2021/22, which would be new officers not just replacements for previous departures. The force was now forecast to reach a complement of just over 1,500 officers by March 2023, which would be its highest ever number.
- Increases in officer numbers were set against the demand resulting from further projected growth in the local population. The budget sought to address this by ring-fencing £1m to support dedicated neighbourhood policing teams and initiatives to address anti-social behaviour and street level drug dealing.
- As PFCC he sought to maximise available resources and would continue to make a case to the government that the current policing funding formula was unfair to Northamptonshire.
- The proposed budget had been developed against the background of challenges resulting from population growth in Northamptonshire, the level of central government funding and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, he commended it as a considered approach that would still deliver on the commitment to frontline policing in the county.

The Panel considered the proposed precept. Members noted that the PFCC had commented robustly about the unfair impact of the police funding formula on Northamptonshire and that he was continuing to press the government for change in this

regard. Reassurance was sought about the basis for the PFCC's case and it was questioned whether he was making any progress in gaining support for it within the government. Members also emphasised the length of time it took to conduct a spending review and the need for policing to be included in the Fair Funding Review process.

The PFCC made the following points:

- He acknowledged that it was very challenging to achieve a change in government policy.
- The government was receptive to his case regarding the police funding formula and had advised that there would be a funding review, but there were no guarantees about the outcome of this for Northamptonshire. In the meantime, the Chief Finance Officer had worked very effectively to secure additional resources where possible.
- He thanked the Panel and Northamptonshire MPs for their support in his continuing efforts to make the case for the county.
- His case about the impact of the current funding formula was based on how it affected Northamptonshire relative to comparable areas. The comparison with Nottinghamshire was illustrative: it had 28% more residents than Northamptonshire but received 83% more grant funding for policing, which would equate to an additional £35m for Northamptonshire if it was funded at the same level. Nottinghamshire generated 33% of its policing funding from the precept compared to 44% in Northamptonshire.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) evaluated forces on a standard basis and had stated in 2019 that Northamptonshire Police had been subject to long term underfunding.

The Panel questioned the PFCC about the rationale for proposing only a £13 increase in the precept rather than £15, particularly if the government had indicated an expectation that commissioners should increase their precepts by the higher amount. It was suggested that the PFCC's proposed approach could risk working against his case that Northamptonshire was under-funded. The PFCC made the following points:

- He had deliberated at length before deciding the proposed precept: it had been the most difficult budget decision he had taken during his term in office.
- The government did see the precept as a local decision that should take account of local conditions. Reflecting this, he considered that it was not the right time to ask Northamptonshire taxpayers for more than he now proposed.
- In setting the precept he had to take account of residents' ability to pay, particularly in the context of the impact of the pandemic and the financial implications of local government reorganisation.
- His approach had also been informed by public consultation: 71% of consultees had said they would be prepared to pay more for policing, 57% had supported a £13 increase in the precept but a majority had opposed a £15 increase.
- He considered that the proposed increase would demonstrate to residents that there was continued investment in policing whilst also reinforcing to the force that resources needed to be managed effectively. Ultimately, he was comfortable that proposing an increase of £13 struck the right balance at this time.

The Panel questioned the PFCC on his level of confidence that the requirement for the Chief Constable to achieve an ongoing annual efficiency saving of 1% was deliverable, given pressures on resources. Members subsequently also sought reassurance about the

force's ability to identify its own innovative solutions to the challenges it faced. The PFCC made the following points:

- The force was on an improvement journey under the current Chief Constable and was making good progress.
- As part of this process the PFCC wanted the force to have an in-built culture of seeking efficiencies and being more robust about identifying resources within existing budgets to meet new frontline demands. This approach should be part of the force's continuing evolution as an organisation and would enable him to show to Northamptonshire residents that the resources provided for policing were being used as well as possible.
- He was satisfied that the 1% target could be achieved and that it was the right time to set it. It reflected the need for continuing evolution and to consider how the force's finite capacity could best be used. Progress was already being made with work on the force's fleet and with the development of enabling services.
- He commended the leadership and tenacity of the Chief Constable and his senior management team, whose approach reflected the principle that effective performance required both a good strategy and a good culture. As a result the force was now getting the basics right: this was demonstrated by improved performance in areas such as burglary, although this needed to be enhanced further.
- The force's activity also joined up with wider work to support community safety such as that done by the targeted Youth Service.
- The force was attracting an increasing proportion of new recruits from outside of the county, which showed that it was seen as a progressive organisation.

The Panel sought reassurance with regard to the use of reserves as part of the proposed budget. The Chief Finance Officer provided additional information in response to points raised by members during the course of discussion as follows:

- The level of reserves available to the PFCC was in a much healthier position than at the start of his term of office, with a sensible level of general reserves and earmarked reserves for specific purposes. This position had assisted in planning the proposed budget and the final decision on the proposed precept.
- The Additionality Reserve included in the budget had been created in 2018/19 at the point when officer numbers were being increased but there was not certainty about the timing of related funding. It was used to smooth the impact of recruitment and staffing levels on the revenue budget. It could also be used to mitigate other one-off costs such as those connected with the withdrawal from Multi-Force Shared Services.

The PFCC highlighted that the Additionality Reserve would now enable the force to recruit additional officers as part of the national uplift to the original planned timescale, despite a recent change to the phasing of government funding as a result of the pandemic.

The Panel sought further clarification and assurance on other aspects of the proposed precept and budget. The Chief Finance Officer provided additional information in response to points raised by members during the course of discussion as follows:

- The provision for staff pay awards in the proposed budget delegated to the force reflected the outcome of the 2020 Spending Review with regard to public sector pay.
- The provision for pensions in the delegated budget reflected that fewer officers had been joining the police pension scheme in recent years under the latest regulations.



- She commended the support provided to the development of the proposed precept and budget by the Chief Constable and his staff and by finance officers at the existing local authorities in the county and the two new authorities. The budget workshop session with Panel members had also been useful and it was hoped to repeat this in future years.
- The proposed precept and budget had been subject to an increased amount of consultation this year including engagement with the local MPs and with parish councils.

The PFCC made the following additional points:

- Starting salaries for Northamptonshire Police officers had been raised during his term of office to assist in attracting recruits, particularly given the proximity of the Metropolitan Police as an alternative employer.
- Even though fewer officers were joining the police pension scheme than in the past the force still paid approximately £18m per year in pension contributions, which represented a significant component in the budget.
- The estates capital programme reflected that it was intended to dispose of the former police and court buildings in Towcester. It was more likely that they would be replaced by converting the existing fire station than by building a new facility, although if a favourable opportunity arose it would be considered. He prioritised having well-equipped officers operating in local communities ahead of using particular buildings.

The Panel considered its conclusions on the PFCC's proposed Police precept for 2021/22. Members made the following points:

- The PFCC's decision needed to take account of the pressures on Northamptonshire residents resulting from the pandemic as well as those associated with the establishment of the new local authorities.
- It was welcomed that the proposed precept would still provide for an increased number of frontline officers. This should support the force in continuing effective activity to address issues such as county lines crime, alongside its commendable contribution to the response to the pandemic.
- It was felt that residents would support proposed investment in neighbourhood policing: the creation of dedicated named neighbourhood teams should help to address the particular issue of people not knowing who to contact about local issues.
- Drug dealing was a significant contributor to wider problems and so activity to address street dealing could also be productive.
- The PFCC should ensure that the force and Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) continued to pursue opportunities to work together to improve service delivery and to make best use of premises, just as local government in Northamptonshire was transforming in order to use resources as effectively as possible.
- The PFCC had set out a clear case for the proposed precept.

**RESOLVED that:**

- a) The Panel supports the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's proposed Police precept for 2021/22.**
- b) The Panel agrees to delegate authority to the Panel Chair and Deputy Chair to approve the final version of its report on the proposed Police precept for 2021/22 to be submitted to the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner.**

## 07/21 Proposed Fire & Rescue Precept 2021/22

The PFCC introduced the report (copies of which had previously been circulated), highlighting the following points:

- The proposed precept and budget would produce a balanced budget for 2021/22 despite significant challenges on the Fire & Rescue budget.
- His intention was to set the Fire & Rescue precept at £5 per year, which was an increase of 8.07% for Band D Council Tax. However, this relied on the government permitting additional flexibility regarding the maximum level of increase possible without the need for a local referendum.
- If this flexibility was not given he proposed to increase the precept by 1.99%. This would still permit a balanced budget but would require a greater contribution from reserves.
- The government had not yet confirmed its position on additional flexibility. In the meantime, the Home Office had agreed to provide an additional £1m funding to support the Fire & Rescue authority's reserves. He was grateful for this support and commended the Chief Finance Officer for her work to secure it.
- Since he had taken responsibility for the governance of NFRS it had been able to recruit 20 additional firefighters, order new appliances and improve its performance on response times and appliance availability. The aim of improving joint working between NFRS and the force was also being delivered.
- The improved position of NFRS had been recognised by HMICFRS, whose recent inspection findings were a positive contrast with those from previous years.
- The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic would have an impact on the resources available to NFRS in addition to other challenges it faced. He ultimately considered that the £5 increase in the precept that he now proposed was necessary to maintain some of the gains that NFRS had recently made.

The Panel considered the proposed precept. Members sought further information as to when the PFCC expected to have an answer from the government on the question of additional flexibility and when he needed to set the precept. The PFCC advised that a Home Office minister had written to the Ministry of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) supporting flexibility specifically for Northamptonshire. This was a positive sign but confirmation was still required. The Chief Finance Officer went on to provide additional information as follows:

- MHCLG was responsible for the final draft settlement. This was expected to be published the next day for parliamentary debate in the following week.
- The PFCC needed to advise collecting authorities of his precept by 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Panel members noted that the Chief Finance Officer's statement on the proposed precept and budget gave the view that the current NFRS Capital Programme was neither affordable nor deliverable in full. The Panel sought confirmation that action was being taken to address this situation. The Chief Finance Officer provided additional information as follows:

- The Chief Fire Officer believed that the Capital Programme could be rationalised to bring financing costs within the necessary envelope and had been tasked by the PFCC with carrying out a full review of it.
- The level of investment included in the current Capital Programme would be pared back, although it would be essential to replace some equipment on safety grounds.

- The overall financial position would be assisted in the medium and longer term by benefits from enabling services coming on-stream and by pursuing similar opportunities to maximise resources.

The PFCC made the following points:

- The development of enabling services was still in the second year of a three-year programme.
- The recruitment of joint posts to lead on IT Services, fleet and commercial activity for both NFRS and the force was another example of action that was being taken to manage demands, which would be particularly important if the flexibility to increase the precept by £5 was not secured.
- The development of the capital programme involved producing an initial set of requirements that was then refined through a challenge process that considered different options available to meet identified needs.
- A move by the government towards making PFCCs the standard model for Fire & Rescue governance could result in more flexibility about how locally-raised resources were used.

The Panel challenged the PFCC about the relationship between his plans for 2021/22 and the Fire & Rescue authority Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which showed significant shortfalls in its later years. Members made the following points:

- Increasing the precept by 5% and increasing capital expenditure in the context of the MTFP position presented could lead to a boom-and-bust situation. It was questioned whether the PFCC was comfortable with the level of risk involved.
- Further assurance was sought about the PFCC's case for increasing the NFRS establishment in the current uncertain financial position.

The Chief Finance Officer provided additional information in response to points raised by members as follows:

- It was expected to take some time to bring the MTFP to a balanced position, although it was hoped to be closer to achieving this in a year's time.
- The Fire & Rescue authority was aware of the risks that it faced and was working to address them. It had highlighted to the Home Office that transferring governance responsibility for NFRS to the PFCC was the start of a process.
- The budget included provision for 20 firefighters recruited in 2020/21 to ensure strength remained in line with the establishment. The 12 additional posts to be recruited in 2021 would enable more cost-effective crewing on call outs: overall budget demands would not increase as a result.

The PFCC made the following points:

- NFRS's position should not be judged purely on the basis of head count, as this did not take account of the combination of whole time and retained firefighters.
- The provision in the proposed budget linked back to the need for NFRS to achieve a safe minimum level of service. It had not been doing so when inspected by HMICFRS in 2018: since the governance transfer NFRS had remained above the necessary level.
- One aspect of this was the strategic decision to increase recruitment where this would enable more appliances to be on the run, such as by deploying a whole time driver to a

retained station. There was an optimum blend of NFRS staffing that would deliver both necessary service coverage and savings.

- He agreed that it would cause problems if the current Capital Programme was not refined but was confident that the MTFP could be brought to a balanced position. However, the ability to raise the precept by £5 in 2021/22 was crucial to this: if this flexibility was not permitted it could have a significant impact on future service provision. He hoped that the support received from the Home Office was an indication of the strength of his case in this regard.

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

The Panel sought further clarification and assurance on other aspects of the proposed precept and budget. A Panel member also questioned whether it was anticipated that NFRS would move towards making the retained crewing model a larger component of the organisation, particularly given that the growth in home working could support the availability of retained personnel in urban areas.

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

- The Fire & Rescue authority was in a better position with regard to reserves than 12 months before.
- The additional £1m received from the Home Office would be committed specifically to reserves.
- General reserves would reach a good, sustainable level, but the authority did not have sufficiently extensive earmarked reserves to assist in mitigating risks and to invest in service change.
- The business case for a future joint control facility would identify how costs would be apportioned between NFRS and the force, taking account of relevant Home Office guidance.
- The implications of the legal case regarding age discrimination in public sector pension reform were not yet clear enough to include provision for this in the MTFP. The MTFP identified this issue as a risk and would be developed as the position on this matter became clearer.

The PFCC made the following points:

- The annual timetable for presenting the proposed precept could disguise the potential benefits that would result from work over a longer term period.
- The strategic use of estates across the force and NFRS was another area that could produce benefits that may not be obvious. This could involve multiple interrelated changes. As an example, the relocation of enabling services to Wellingborough would open up space at force headquarters; this could be used to relocate the force's Professional Standards Department from its current base in Daventry; in turn, this would open up a facility in Daventry that might be used for a joint control room or might be sold.
- NFRS would continue with a hybrid staffing model, which included strategically locating whole time staff to support appliance availability. Retained crewing involved challenges but might also benefit from factors such as an increase in community-mindedness resulting from the pandemic.

- NFRS was going through an improvement process and there was still scope to look at ways of using public resources to produce the most benefit. However, he was pleased with the progress made so far, particularly in the context of the pandemic, and genuinely confident in plans for the future.
- If he was re-elected in May 2021 his new strategic plans for both NFRS and the force would be evolutionary and not a dramatic change in the direction of travel of either organisation.

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

The Panel considered its conclusions on the PFCC's proposed Fire & Rescue precept for 2021/22. Members made the following points:

- The Fire & Rescue authority was in a very tight financial position; arguably too tight given the significant pressures in later years of the current MTFP.
- NFRS had faced longstanding challenges due to the relatively small size of its budget. Central government needed to make appropriate provision for the resources that this function required as there was only so much that could be done locally using Council Tax and available reserves.
- A £5 increase in the precept was a relatively limited request in the overall context.
- The potential implications for future services if the government did not permit additional flexibility for the PFCC to raise the precept by £5 were concerning.

**RESOLVED that:**

- a) The Panel supports the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's proposal to increase the Fire & Rescue precept for 2021/22 by £5.00 (8.07%) at Band D should the government permit the necessary precept flexibility required to do so.**
- b) The Panel supports the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's proposal to increase the Fire & Rescue precept for 2021/22 by £1.23 (1.99%) at Band D if this remains the maximum increase permitted without the need to hold a local referendum.**
- c) The Panel agrees to delegate authority to the Panel Chair and Deputy Chair to approve the final version of its report on the proposed Fire & Rescue precept for 2021/22 to be submitted to the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner.**

The PFCC thanked the Panel for its support and thanked his staff members, the Chief Constable and the Chief Fire Officer for their contribution to the development of the proposed precepts and budgets. He emphasised that being scrutinised by the Panel did require him to be on top of his brief and considered that the fact that there was a constructive working relationship between the PFCC and the Panel in Northamptonshire ultimately benefitted local residents.

08/21 Police, Fire & Crime Panel Work Programme 2020/21

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager presented the report (copies of which had previously been circulated) setting out the latest version of the Panel's work programme, highlighting the following points:

- It was open to the Panel to consider business for its final scheduled meeting in 2020/21.

- The report also set out a proposed process for managing advance questions by Panel members to the PFCC intended to implement the resolution on this matter agreed by the Panel at its previous meeting.

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

- It was questioned whether the Panel could expect to scrutinise a new Police & Crime Plan in 2021/22.
- The Panel should seek an update on the impact on community safety in Northamptonshire of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, to cover the pressures on the force and NFRS, how these had been mitigated and what additional support had been sought and received from the government.
- It was important for the Panel to maintain continuity in its work through mid-2021. It should consider holding a meeting in April or May 2021. If held after the election on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 this meeting could be used to engage with the PFCC about their plans. This would provide an assurance to residents that the Panel was still carrying out its role of scrutinising and supporting the PFCC.
- The government wanted local elections to go ahead on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. When the timing of elections was confirmed it would give a direction on matters affected by this.
- The Panel still needed to give further consideration to the performance information it wished the PFCC to present in future. It would be helpful for Panel members to reach a consolidated view that could be put to the PFCC. This might be done at a separate working group style meeting.
- Panel members might use the pre-meeting ahead of the next Panel meeting to consider the question about future performance information.
- It was questioned whether a new website for the Panel would be available from April 2021, given the role of the website in providing information about the Panel to members of the public.
- The Chair advised that the provision of a new website for the Panel would need to be resolved by the new Northamptonshire local authorities. One would become the host authority for the Panel and it would address necessary matters, including those that the Panel had highlighted following its last meeting.
- Councillor Jelley advised that the two shadow authorities were considering future hosting arrangements for the Panel and that IT provision was part of work supporting local government reorganisation. A new Panel website might not be available as soon as the new Northamptonshire authorities come into operation, but matters relating to the Panel were being discussed.

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager provided additional information during the course of discussion as follows:

- The timing of scrutiny of a new Police & Crime Plan would depend on when this was produced by the PFCC and the form it took: for example, a new PFCC might choose to produce a broad statement of intent followed later by a more detailed document.
- The dates of Panel meetings in 2021 did not differ much from a normal year. The final Panel meeting in the municipal year was generally at the start of April. The panel then met again in late June or early July, to reflect that local authorities needed to appoint their representatives at annual general meetings.

- A formal meeting would not be the only means open to the Panel to meet with a newly (re-) elected PFCC in mid-2021.
- If the Panel sought to hold a formal meeting in April or May 2021 it would need to consider how local government reorganisation might affect the councillor membership of the Panel at that point. Clarification would need to be sought on this.
- The Panel should take into account when considering future activity that any conclusions it reached would be subject to agreement by the Panel appointed for 2021/22. If a new PFCC was elected in May 2021 they may also want to work in different ways.

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

- Police & Crime commissioners were required to issue a new or updated Police & Crime Plan within the year in which they were elected.
- The Home Office was believed to be publishing the outcome of the first stage of its review into Police & Crime commissioners in the following week. The Panel might want to consider this matter.
- He had previously offered to give presentations to the Panel on the Youth Service, estates and action responding to domestic abuse in the county.
- It should be possible to provide an update on the response to COVID-19 in Northamptonshire to the Panel meeting in March 2021, even if this was only a preliminary to a fuller version.
- He encouraged the Panel to take into account the opportunity to use briefing sessions to consider performance information. This approach could allow some information to be presented more fully than in the public domain. He had committed that the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer should be available for annual briefing sessions with the Panel. More detailed briefings on specific topics could also be held. He recognised that the Panel was ultimately seeking information in order to support its role of checking that the PFCC was holding to account the two chief officers effectively.

The Chair subsequently invited the Panel to consider the proposed process for managing advance questions to the PFCC. A member highlighted that the process involved quite tight timescales without the opportunity for co-ordination between Panel members. This created a risk of Panel members asking multiple overlapping questions that could be difficult for the Office of the PFCC (OPFCC) to manage.

The PFCC supported the aim that the Panel should receive full answers to questions it raised but cautioned against taking an overly-procedural approach.

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager made the following points:

- The Secretariat could help to deal with multiple questions on the same topic by producing a consolidated question covering all of the aspects raised by members to go to the OPFCC or by advising when the same question had been raised by more than one member.
- The advance questions process should not become too prescriptive or formalised but should operate with the minimum level of procedure required. By enabling factual questions to be dealt with outside of Panel meetings where possible it aimed to maximise the time available to the Panel at meetings for informed discussion focussed on scrutinising and supporting the PFCC.

[Councillors Jelley and Griffiths left the meeting during the preceding discussion].

The Panel then sought to reach a conclusion on the question of holding a meeting during mid-2021. Members made the following additional points:

- It was likely to be confirmed in March if local elections would go ahead on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- Many factors that could affect the Panel's arrangements in the near future were currently uncertain. However, the position was likely to be clearer by the next Panel meeting.
- Panel members continuing in 2021/22 would need to know when the Panel would meet again after the next meeting and it was questioned how this would be confirmed.

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager provided additional information in response to points raised by members as follows:

- It would not be appropriate to hold a formal Panel meeting in April as this would be during the pre-election period for the PFCC election. The pre-election period did not require all normal business to cease but holding a meeting that could be perceived as giving a platform to a candidate in the election would be open to challenge.
- The timing of local elections would affect arrangements for a Panel meeting in May 2021. If elections took place on 6<sup>th</sup> May the new Northamptonshire authorities would need time to appoint their representatives to the Panel. If elections took place later the Panel would need to clarify its councillor membership in the interim period.
- It was intended to present at least an outline meeting programme for 2021/22 to the next Panel meeting, even if that was subject to change as the year progressed.

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

- The Panel would not be able to meet with a newly-elected PFCC immediately following the election as the outgoing PFCC formally held office until the following week.
- It would be challenging to hold a Panel meeting during May after elections on 6<sup>th</sup> May. Local authorities would need to confirm their representatives on the Panel, whilst a newly-elected PFCC would have a considerable amount to take in. It could be more prudent for the Panel to meet in June.

**RESOLVED that:**

- a) Agrees the proposed process for managing advance questions by Panel members to the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, subject to the addition of a provision that the Panel Secretariat will forward a consolidated question to the Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner if more than one Panel member asks a question on the same issue.**
- b) Requests that an update on the impact of responding to COVID-19 on policing and community safety in Northamptonshire be provided to the Panel at its next meeting.**
- c) Agrees that the pre-meeting ahead of the next Panel meeting should start at 12.00pm to enable members to have an informal discussion about the performance information that is presented to the Panel in future.**



### 09/21 Complaints Monitoring Report

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager presented the report (copies of which had previously been circulated), highlighting that in the period from July – December 2020 no new complaints or conduct matters had been recorded and there had been no existing complaints or conduct matters that were outstanding.

The Chair invited members to raise any points relating to the report that they wished the Panel to consider.

**RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the report.**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 4.05pm.

Next scheduled Panel meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 1.00pm.

This information can be made available in other formats upon request.  
Please contact James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager  
on tel. 07500 605276 or e-mail: [jedmunds@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:jedmunds@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

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## Agenda Item No: 6

### NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

24<sup>th</sup> March 2021

#### Subject: COVID-19 Response update

#### 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented and unique demands on our communities and public services across Northamptonshire. The pandemic has brought challenges that have never been faced before, relating to demand, service delivery, resilience and engagement with communities for both Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue.

This report provides a detailed update to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the challenges and demand placed on both Northamptonshire Police and our Fire and Rescue Service and the work they have undertaken to keep our communities safe during this pandemic.

#### 2. Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

##### 2.1 Multi-agency structures

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue (NFRS) have played a full part in the multi-agency response being at both the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG), the Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) the Strategic Co-ordination centre and also relevant sub groups such as the Community Resilience Cell, and Excess Deaths Cell as well as more recently the Vaccination Cell. Most of this has been co-ordinated via the Joint Operations Team.

##### 2.2 Additional Activity

In the first wave of the pandemic NFRS were undertaking:

- Ambulance driving for East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) between March and August.
- Mortuary support, moving deceased from Hospital Mortuaries to the temporary mortuary at Wollaston. March to June.
- Pharmacy deliveries to those who are shielding, March through to August.

##### 2.3 Since the beginning of December NFRS started supporting other agencies again by:

- Ambulance driving for EMAS again, 22 staff trained to undertake this with 3 or 4 staff per day doing shifts.
- Mortuary Support (just finished) 12 staff trained and doing 2/3 days per week moving deceased from NGH to Temporary mortuary.
- We have 20 volunteers awaiting training to become vaccinators, the plan being for our staff to step in when some of the current ones go back to work once furlough etc. ends.

2.4 The national position of the FBU however has seen them effectively withdrawing support from doing additional COVID activity i.e. Ambulance driving, Mortuary support and supporting vaccination centres, meaning that this has been done largely by either retained or non-operational staff. Despite this additional challenge, NFRS has managed to continue to deliver services and support partner agencies throughout the pandemic.

### **3. Business as usual**

3.1 NFRS have maintained normal response capability with an average of 20 appliances available on a day to day basis and also maintained our standards of response of a first appliance in an average of 10 minutes.

3.2 Fire control have also delivered a normal service as well as picking up all COVID absence reporting for the service.

### **4. Prevention and Protection**

4.1 NFRS have continued to deliver safe and well visits to those most vulnerable taking referrals from the Police, Ambulance, Social care and voluntary agencies. The Prevention team also managed the Pharmacy delivery process and the Youth team have maintained contact and done welfare visits to cadets.

4.2 The protection team adapted their activity to support the pandemic as usual visits were not possible, therefore they did desktop audits and support for places like care homes and hospitals, at one point assisting NGH to bring a ward on-line that had been closed to due to Fire Safety concerns.

4.3 In addition to this work, the protection team also undertook the following:

- They supported the night-time economy when this opened up last year.
- Assisted in ensuring that accommodation used for homeless was suitable
- During the second wave they have continued to undertake protection work on a risk basis targeting high risk premises.

## **5. Training and NFRS Staff**

5.1 During the first wave NFRS “in-housed” its recruits’ course at short notice due to the closure of the Fire Service College. A lot of training has now been moved to online such as command assessments.

5.2 Most office-based staff are working at home; however, workshops have been undertaken at Moulton Logistics Centre (MLC) throughout and some departments have had a rota to keep minimum staffing in the office where this is needed i.e. ICT, H&S team etc. Normal performance and assurance boards have shown that most business as usual activity is on track with minimal slippage for some work.

### **5.3 Staff Absence.**

This has been relatively low when compared to other agencies and NFRS have been consistently below the national average for Fire Services. At the Peak in April last year NFRS had a maximum of 6% of the workforce off either with COVID or self-isolating due to family members. Since August NFRS have had an average of a rolling 2% absent which includes those staff who are shielding. This went up slightly over Christmas and the New Year. Staff absence is being managed through the resource management centre for operational staff and by department heads for other areas. Since July sickness levels are lower than the same period the previous year.

### **5.4 Service Capacity.**

This has been the biggest area of pressure and due to the fact NFRS is a small service there was not an opportunity to set up a separate operational team to manage COVID activity. Therefore, the Senior management team have formed the Strategic management group and have managed the COVID pandemic on top of normal business. Other officers have had to take on additional responsibility for COVID work on top of their day job.

### **5.5 Staff Welfare.**

Staff welfare has been a big focus for NFRS with the in-house wellbeing support team stepping up to support staff in addition to the other wellbeing support we have available

- Occupational Health
- Health Assured
- Firefighters Charity
- Sapper Support
- Kind Minds
- Tier 1

NFRS have also done regular weekly updates to staff via the Chief Officers Weekly Comms and also communicated important information via “COVID

Alerts” or video messages which promulgate important safety and operational information. We have also supported all LRF comms via our social media channels.

## **6. Funding**

6.1 With regard to funding NFRS received a total of £660K in COVID grant from government and the service has also put in another bid for funding for around £130K. Further details of the monies received by NFRS are set out in the NFRS Budget Update Report that will be presented to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at the meeting.

6.2 As an overview the spend has been on:

- Staffing, either backfilling those who are off work or funding those who are doing work supporting other agencies.
- PPE
- Hygiene and Cleaning Materials
- ICT equipment to facilitate home working and remote meetings i.e. webcams for stations.
- Lost income due to cancelled external courses at Chelveston

## **7. HMICFRS COVID Inspection**

7.1 Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service won praise for its ‘positive contribution’ to the community during the coronavirus pandemic. The report shows how NFRS has managed to balance its COVID response while maintaining its core role of responding to calls from the public and attending emergencies. Firefighters and staff have gone the extra mile to look after the vulnerable and to protect lives in Northamptonshire.

7.2 A copy of the letter we received from HMICFRS can be found at appendix 1

## **8. NFRS Response to COVID-19 in Numbers**

8.1 Details of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue’s response to COVID-19 is set out below.

# Our response



# to COVID-19

\* Data captured between 1st July 2020 — 22nd February 2021 (as per timeline)



We maintained an average appliance availability of

## 20

throughout this period of the pandemic allowing us to respond to any emergency and assist other agencies with the wider community response.

## 1

Project completed and evaluated— Joint Stores and Relocation

On the 1st November 2020 our RBIP was reinstated and reprioritised following its original start date of April 2020 being delayed due to the first national lockdown and restrictions in place.

## 55

From the 1st June to date, the wellbeing team received 55 wellbeing referrals & made 39 check in calls to volunteers who supported EMAS and the mortuary.

## 15

COVID-19 Alerts published on Fireplace

## 7988

During this period of the pandemic, which involved two national lockdowns and local flooding; a total of 7988 calls to control were received. They mobilised to 3241 incidents.

## #NorthantsTogether

## 474

NFRS supported East Midlands Ambulance Service once again, with 202 shifts between the 14th December 2020 and 22nd February 2021.

We assisted ambulance personnel with both driving and patients, supporting a total of 474 patients, 59 of which, were confirmed COVID19 positive.

We also had a core group of 12 staff that assisted the hospital and mortuary. Over 91 shifts between 21st December 2020 and 22nd February 2021, we provided around 497 hours of support between NGH & KGH to the mortuary.

## 5.43

Was the number of wholetime days/shifts lost per head due to sickness. This is a reduction from 5.46 for the same period last year.

## 40%

During this time of the pandemic, we saw a 40% reduction in RTC's compared to the same period last year.

## 97%

Throughout this period of the Pandemic, 97% of operational staff revalidated in the centrally assessed safety critical core training skills. The remaining 3%, who didn't attend in Jan/Feb, was due to maternity and long term sickness.

## 917

Home Fire Safety Checks and Refits Completed

From the 1st July—31st December, NFRS completed 917 Home Fire Safety checks and refits. We also recorded 121 urgent refits.

During our pandemic response, we have successfully carried out all Incident Command Assessments at Levels 1,2 & 3.

We also ran additional Level 1 courses so we could further increase our number of Incident Commanders within the service, which is critical in keeping our staff and communities safe.

## 9. Northamptonshire Police – Operation Talla

9.1 Operation Talla is Northamptonshire Police’s response to the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic. During the early stages of the pandemic, the force defined, and prioritised which functions were critical to maintain to ensure the core role of policing continued to be met.

9.2 The Force defined its critical functions as being able to maintain the ability to deal with:

- Major, Critical and Emergency Incidents
- Serious Crime
- Firearms Incidents
- Protecting Vulnerable People
- Serious Public Order
- Fatal and Serious Road Traffic Collisions
- Ensure the health, safety & well-being of staff through the provision of effective training, equipment, support and governance to deal with operational challenges.
- To provide custody facilities and associated justice department functions
- To deal effectively with all matters which impact upon community cohesion, or the legitimacy of the Force
- To maintain a cadre of Police Staff with specialist knowledge e.g. Firearms and Critical Incident Commanders

9.3 Every officer was categorised into one of four categories dependent upon their role and based upon the above. This enabled the force to identify departments that could be ‘folded’ temporarily in order to support critical functions, starting with category four as follows:

### **Category 1: Core Operational Function**

*Basic operational policing, maintenance of public safety and confidence. These functions must maintain at least critical levels at all times.*

### **Category 2: Critical Support to Operational Function**

*Specialist operational policing that directly supports frontline policing or would have a significant impact on core policing if it was not available for an extended period of time. These must maintain a core level even when collapsed.*

### **Category 3: Non-Critical Support to Operational Function**

*Operational policing that indirectly supports frontline policing or would have some impact on core policing if it was not available for an extended period of time.*

### **Category 4: Complementary Policing Function**

*Any policing team that does not provide operational support to frontline policing or would have little or no impact on core policing if it were not available for an extended period of time.*

9.4 In early April the Force purchased and rolled-out a huge number of laptops to officers and staff in what was an incredibly short timeframe. The bandwidth capability and VPN capacity into the organisation’s servers was also dramatically



increased, enabling anyone who had to work from home to continue to support policing operations.

- 9.5 In many ways, Northamptonshire Police were both innovative and leaders in the model of approach to Covid-19. The Force was one of the first in the country to identify an elevated risk to visible ethnic minority officers and staff. The risk assessment and associated mitigation was identified as national best practice. The Force was also the first to design and utilise a Joint Enforcement Team for Covid, working closely with partners in joint patrols well ahead of the government introduction of marshals, and culminating in a multi-agency enforcement and compliance team.
- 9.6 The Force Control Room (FCR) ensured that many staff were able to take non-emergency calls from home; those who were identified as having to 'shield' or were otherwise vulnerable, to continue to provide vital services to the public. Northamptonshire Police also made use of the 'Single Online Home', the national online reporting portal for police forces across the UK. A process for ensuring that incidents reported online were treated with the same expediency as calls was devised, ensuring all reports were turned into incidents. A dedicated team of staff not only monitored the reports but were responsible for re-contacting those who reported personally. This received hugely positive feedback from the public; to date over 14,000 reports have been personally responded to.
- 9.7 Officers and staff having to self-isolate were utilised in other roles where they could not perform their 'day job' from home. This ability to effectively remould the Force operating model, led by the Chief Constable and a team of dedicated Op Talla officers, enabled Northamptonshire Police to effectively continue to provide an uninterrupted service to the communities it serves.

## **10. Communities**

- 10.1 One positive aspect of COVID has been the public coming together to both identify vulnerability and support people within their own community. We have seen examples of this from police engagement with multi faith groups and our links into the Strategic Coordination Centre (SCC) community cell. This has been vital at a time when traditional methods of Police engagement with so-called 'hard to reach communities' has been hampered and we have been forced to be innovative with our approaches. Countywide community engagement officers maintained their links with a cross section of communities, and they were able to highlight concerns through the Op Talla structure and ensure NP deployment where necessary, and targeted patrols. Literature around COVID rules and regulations was produced in different languages and distributed across community groups.
- 10.2 Local communities were often concerned by social media reports during the pandemic. This included vaccine scaremongering in recent times, through to far right and left rhetoric that has caused concern and upset within many of our communities. There was a rise on reports of phishing contact linked to the pandemic and fear of crime increased within communities due to mostly fake stories shared on community group platforms such as WhatsApp. A movement against 5G networks was widespread across the country, with some reports believing that the masts were responsible for the spread of Covid. Several incidents of damage were recorded locally but this did not take hold in the same way as it did in other counties.

- 10.3 The restrictions in place around places of worship, care homes, funerals and weddings all caused real community concerns. This became more pronounced where there were high profile breaches, and several were the focus of media attention. Moldovan and Romanian elections took place in 2020, both passed without event and with full compliance with the law. There were concerns from members of the public prior to these but all events passed without issue.
- 10.4 The summer of 2020 saw the death of George Floyd in the US which had a huge impact upon communities across the UK. In Northamptonshire, there were several protests, but all protestors complied and were peaceful. Police worked with the local authorities to help protestors comply with social distancing and protesting safely. A series of Zoom meetings with various community groups took place and Police worked alongside partners to offer reassurance to BAME communities locally. A joint partnership tasking meeting was established allowing agencies to work together and identified priority areas for education, messaging and enforcement.
- 10.5 During the pandemic, Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) were 'red-circled' during key periods of lockdown and tighter restriction, to provide the primary response to patrols and proactive work for Op Talla. This had an impact on the time NPTs were able to dedicate to other community work. However, the majority of antisocial behaviour and other localised issues reduced significantly with lockdown restrictions. Despite this defined Covid role, NPTs also carried out a large-scale operation covering 'One hundred warrants in one hundred days', retaining the focus on drugs and other illegal activity across the county.
- 10.6 Additionally, intelligence gather continued in relation to other issues such as 'County Lines' with the force achieving 72 convictions and over 221 years imprisonment for a large-scale investigation into drug importation into the county; eighteen County Lines were dismantled during this operation which was widely reported in the media locally.

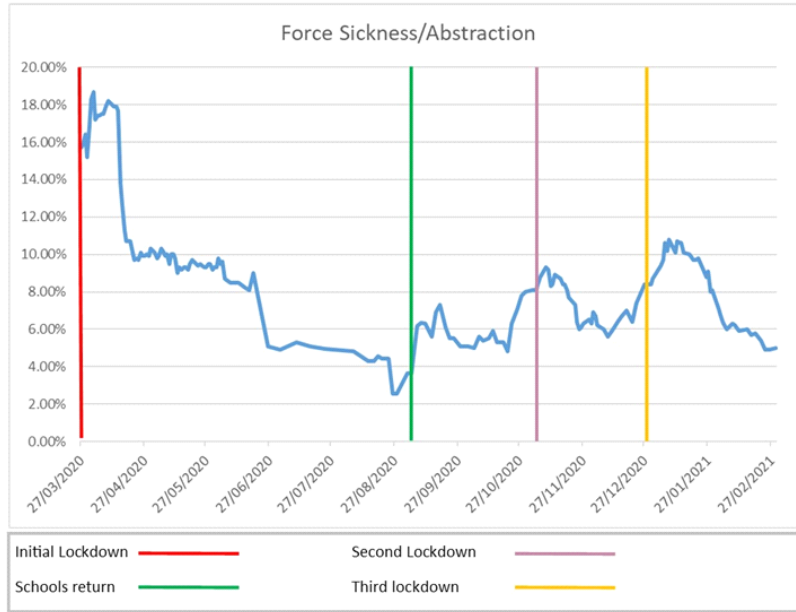
## **11 Resourcing Levels and Demand**

- 11.1 Minimum staffing levels have been created to support our Response Team structure and function. However, with fluctuating restrictions being placed on travel, businesses and social gatherings at a local and national level, the impact has altered some areas of demand for policing services. For example, resilience built to incorporate policing of the night-time economy is currently not required with all licensed premises being closed. Conversely, the requirement to police restriction of movement or mixing of households has increased calls for service in other areas.
- 11.2 Throughout the duration of the pandemic, Northamptonshire Police maintained a sophisticated resource monitoring system, which included a dedicated 'Covid Hotline' and a 'contact-tracing' system which was more finely tuned than the national, allowing us to maintain operational resilience.

Fig 1. below outlines the overall level of abstraction from policing over the course of the pandemic. Initial abstraction rate rose sharply to nearly 19%. This was due to the inclusion of those who were shielding but working fully from home. During April as the impact became clearer, we were able to remove those people from the list who were shielding or vulnerable, but who were able to deliver the whole of their role from home (mainly Police Staff who were able to continue to work to the same level as their colleagues in other support roles).

11.3 In June and July, we saw further reductions in abstraction before a rise following summer holidays and the return of schools in September. The Northants abstraction rate broadly mirrored that of the nation as a whole. During January, abstraction sharply, with over 170 officers either sick or self-isolating, including frontline response officers. Of those self-isolating, many were able to continue to offer some support to colleagues by conducting enquiries at home.

Fig. 1

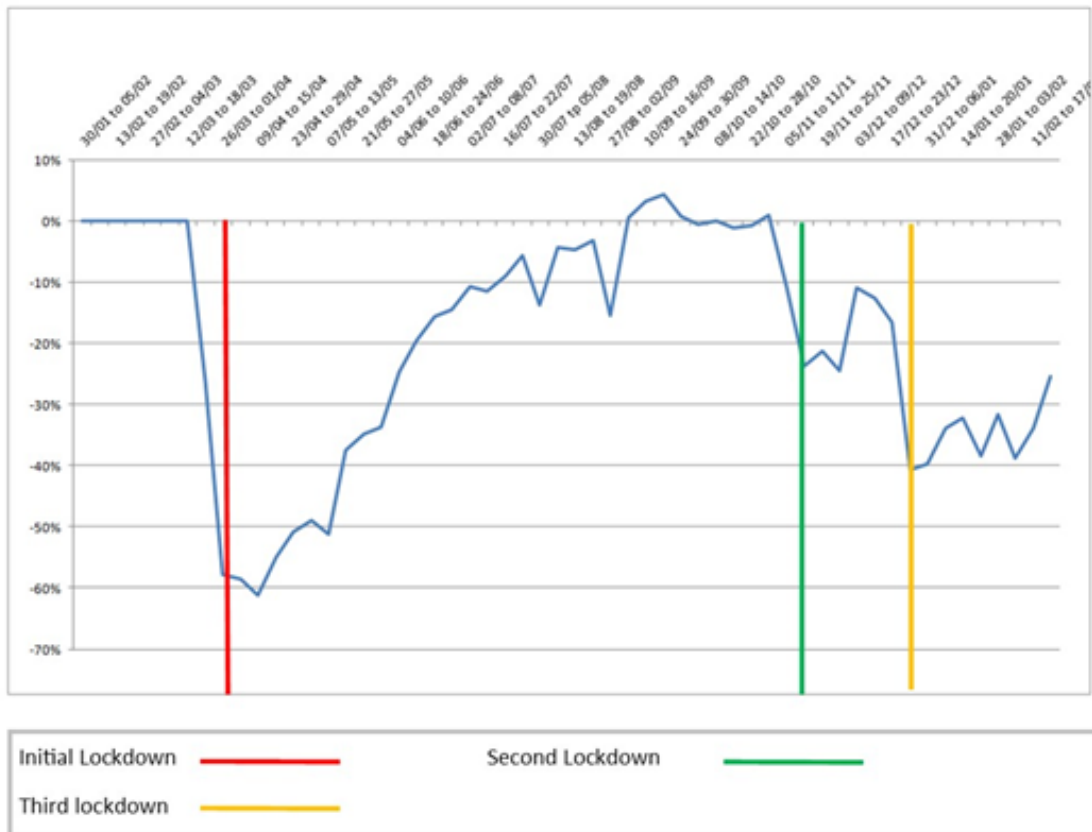


## 12. Demand

12.1 The impact of Covid-19 on demand has been a balance between reducing crime and associated calls for service, and a rise in the requirement to police new restrictions. This was stark during the first lockdown period when crime dropped sharply and Northamptonshire – along with forces nationally – were faced with new legislation such as the restriction of movement.

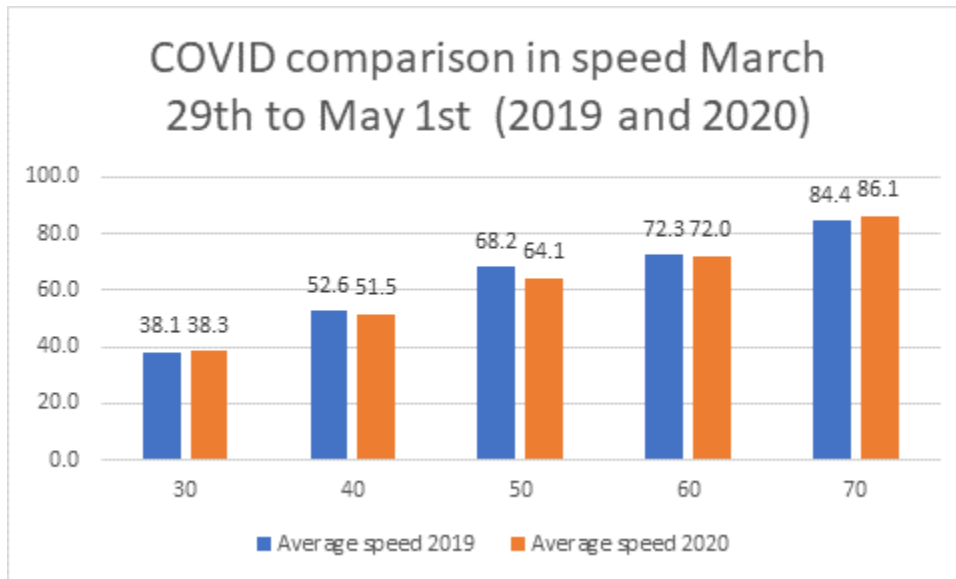
12.2 Traffic on the county’s roads plummeted during the initial lockdown (fig. 2), dipping again in the second lockdown (although as can be seen, nowhere near as sharply as the first). The third lockdown commencing 31<sup>st</sup> of January saw a further drop in traffic on the roads, far more sharply than the second lockdown but falling short of the 60% plus seen in the first lockdown.

Fig. 2



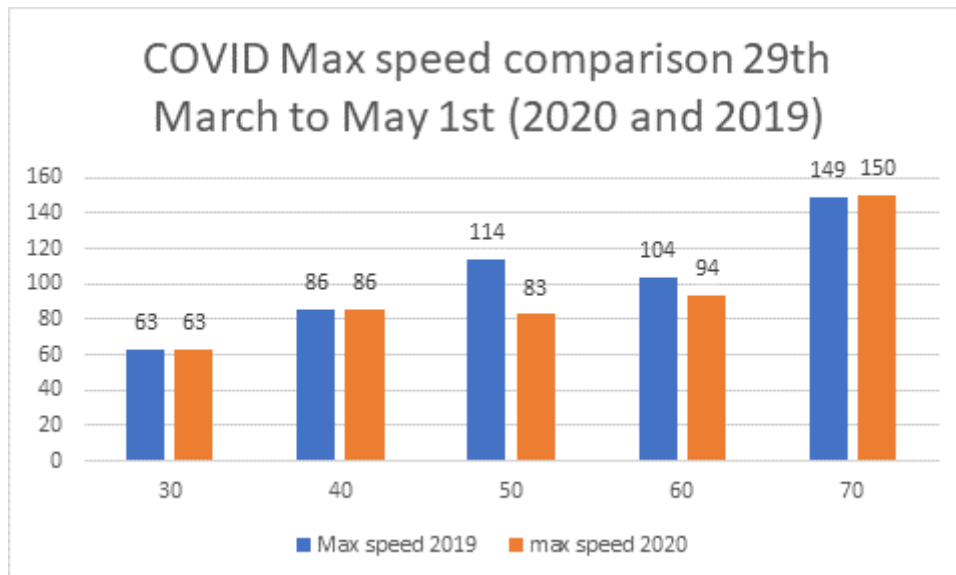
- 12.3 Those killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Northamptonshire’s roads has dropped significantly over the past 12 months. This reduction coincides with a significant reduction in traffic on the county’s roads over the same period of time and as such it is likely that as traffic returns to normal levels, there may be an increase in KSIs, whilst hopefully at the same time maintaining the longer-term downward trend.
- 12.4 Actual speeding compared to perceived speeding have both altered as a result of lockdown. Actual speeding remains largely unchanged to pre-lockdown levels but obviously now accounts for a higher proportion of vehicles on the roads. We have seen a slight increase in the number of high-speed detections. During the initial lockdown, there were some extremely high speeds, attributed again to the lack of vehicles using the roads and the propensity for people to increase speed as a result. Northamptonshire Police have however seen a large increase in the number of complaints in relation to perception of excess speeds.
- 12.5 The inability to conduct static roadside check sites safely has drastically reduced the number of officer witnessed tickets compared to the 2019 figures. Fig. 3 below illustrates that there were similar speeds recorded in 2019 and 2020.

Fig. 3



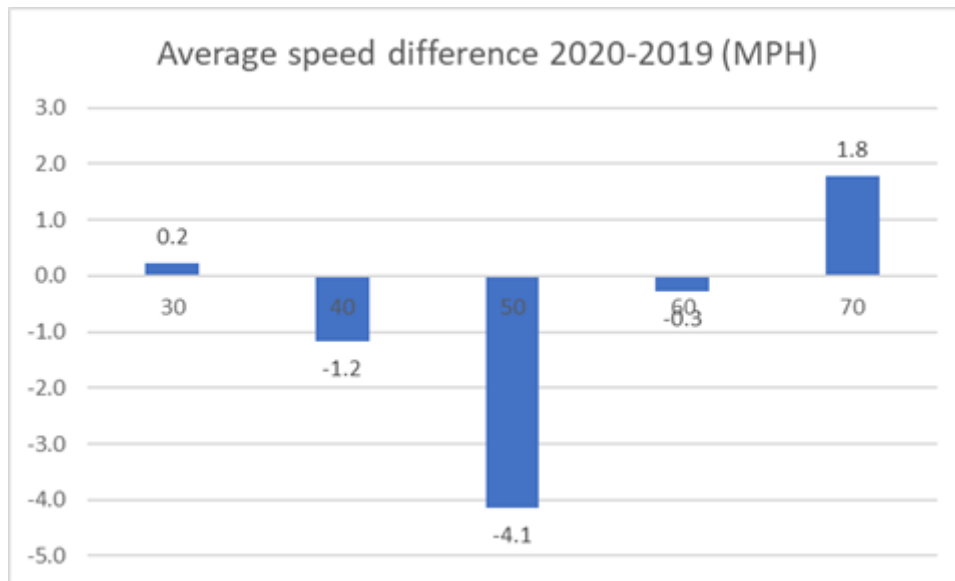
12.6 Fig. 4 shows the maximum speeds recorded compared between the two years. It is notable that there was a drop in the 50mph category in particular.

Fig. 4



12.7 Fig. 5 shows the average speed difference between the two years in miles per hour. The reduction in the 50mph category again can be seen clearly.

**Fig. 5**



**13. Calls for Service**

13.1 During the past 12 months, calls for service dropped at key points during the lockdown cycles in line with other demand as has been previously seen. Fig. 6 below illustrates the significant reductions in 999 calls, non-emergency calls, incidents and crimes recorded during similar periods. The first column indicates ‘business as usual’ with demand in 2019. However, the second and third columns were taken during lockdowns 1 and 3 (March and December 2020 respectively).

**Fig. 6**

	W/C 25/03/2019	W/C 23/03/2020	W/C 15/02/2021
Total 999 calls received (% answered in SLA)	2,342 (91.4%)	1,770 (92.5%)	1,704 (91.0%)
Total 101 calls received	5,268	3,588	3,774
Total incidents recorded	3,618	2,679	3,379
Total crime recorded	1,169	934	1,097

13.2 The following graph (fig. 7) illustrates some key dates and impacts upon incident levels. Of note is the initial drop following lockdown in March 2020, followed by the spike in incident levels in April. This can be further seen by the graph in fig. 8 which illustrates the huge rise in Covid-related demand during the same period, followed by a gradual and then steady decline in May when lifting of restrictions started.

Covid-breaches and incidents reduced with the easing of restrictions, which was accompanied by greater levels of crime and other incidents.

Fig. 7

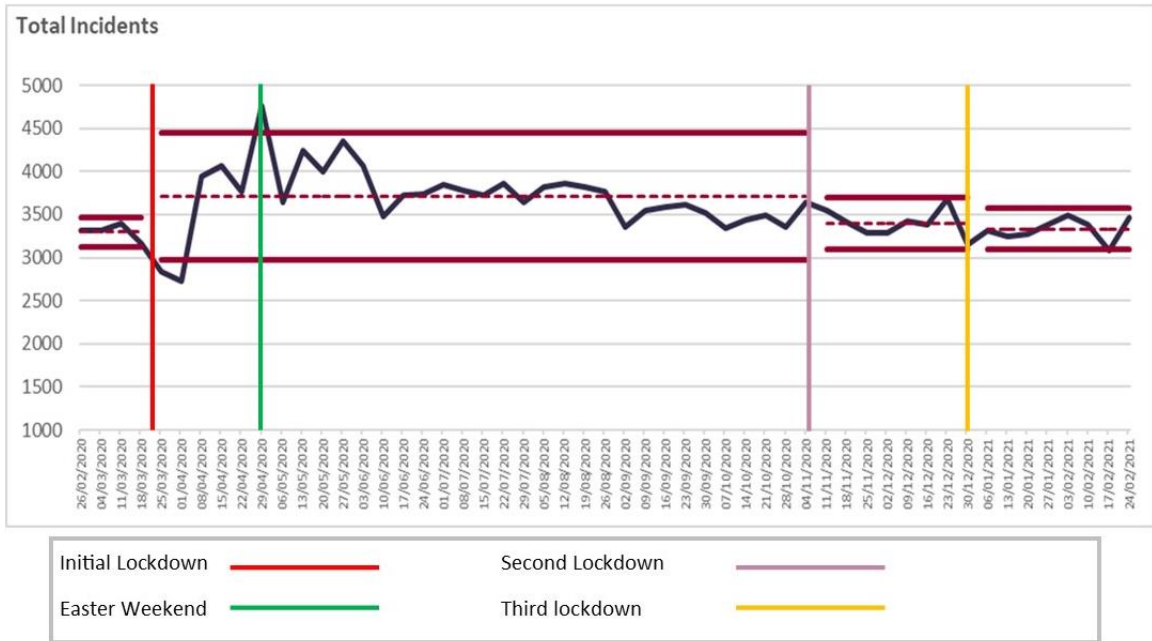


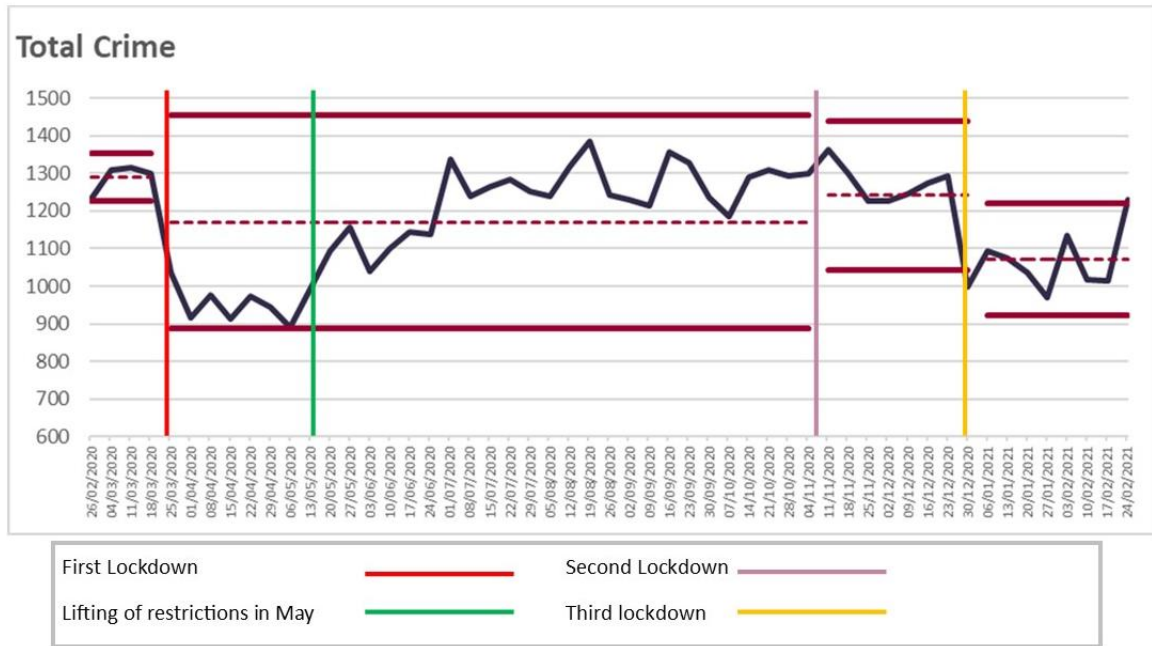
Fig. 8



13.3 The impact upon crime locally can also be seen in fig. 9 below, with crime levels plummeting (as widely reported in the media) after the first lockdown, with a gradual rise following the lift off of restrictions. Crime levels remained fairly consistent even during the second lockdown, until they again dropped in the third

lockdown – though in line with other demand, not to levels seen in the first lockdown.

Fig. 9



13.4 The following crime-types in particular have relevance to the impact of Covid upon community safety:

Fig. 10

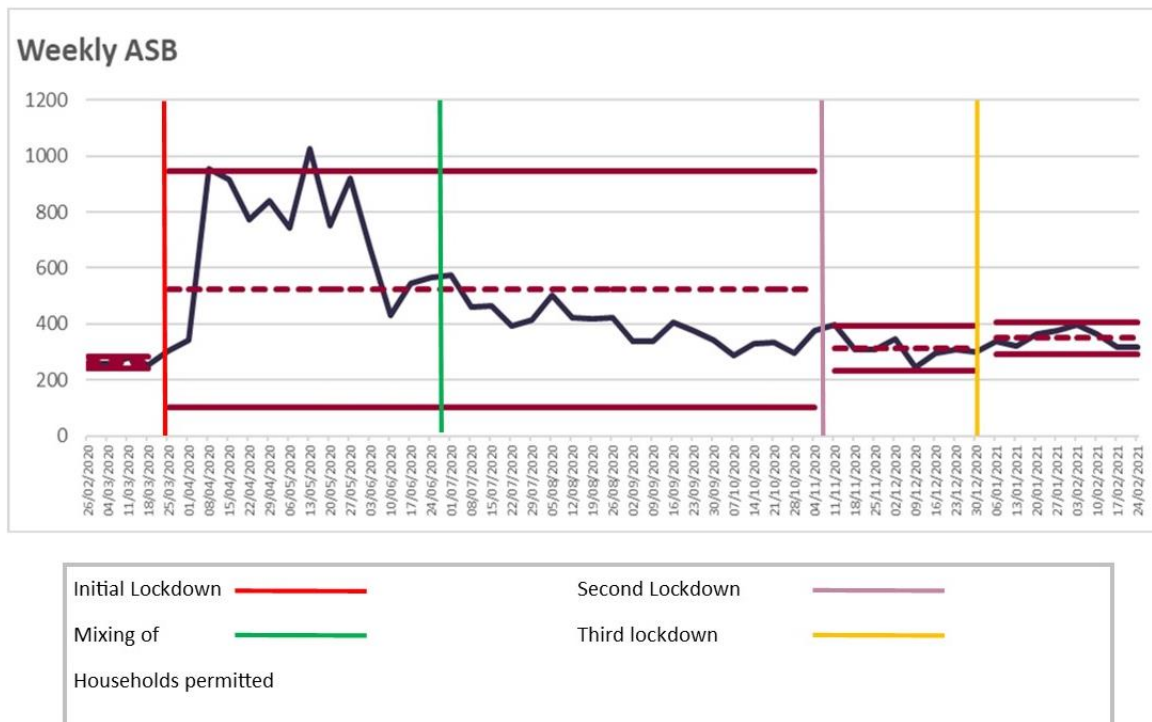




Fig. 11

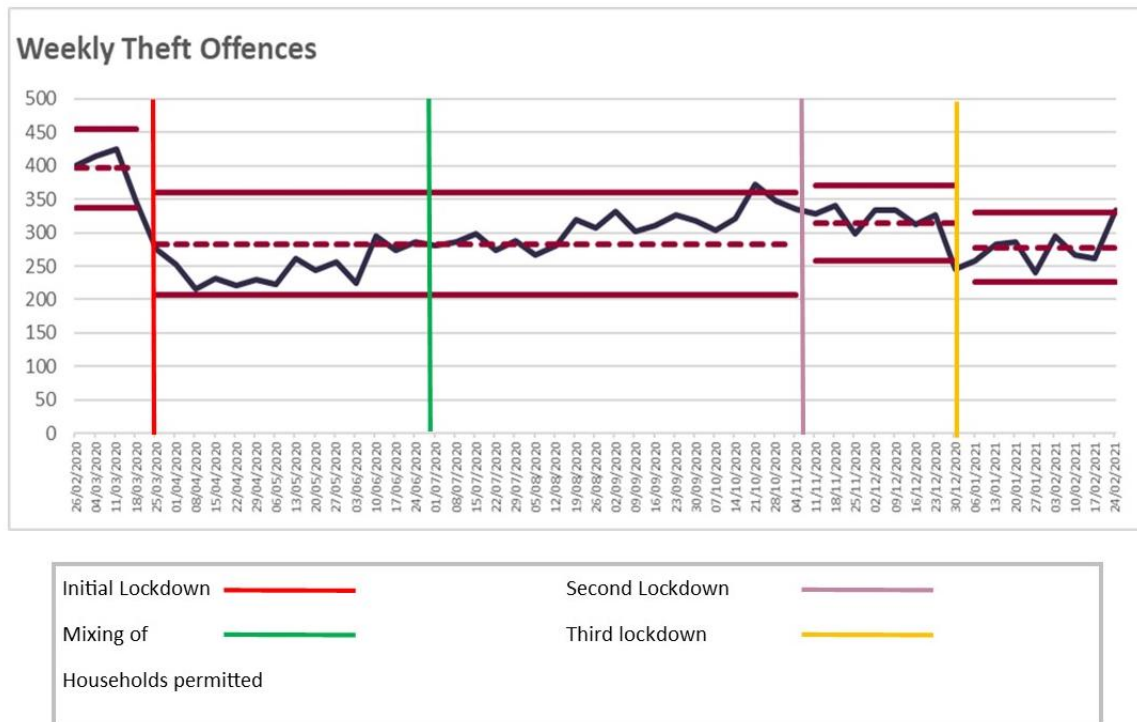
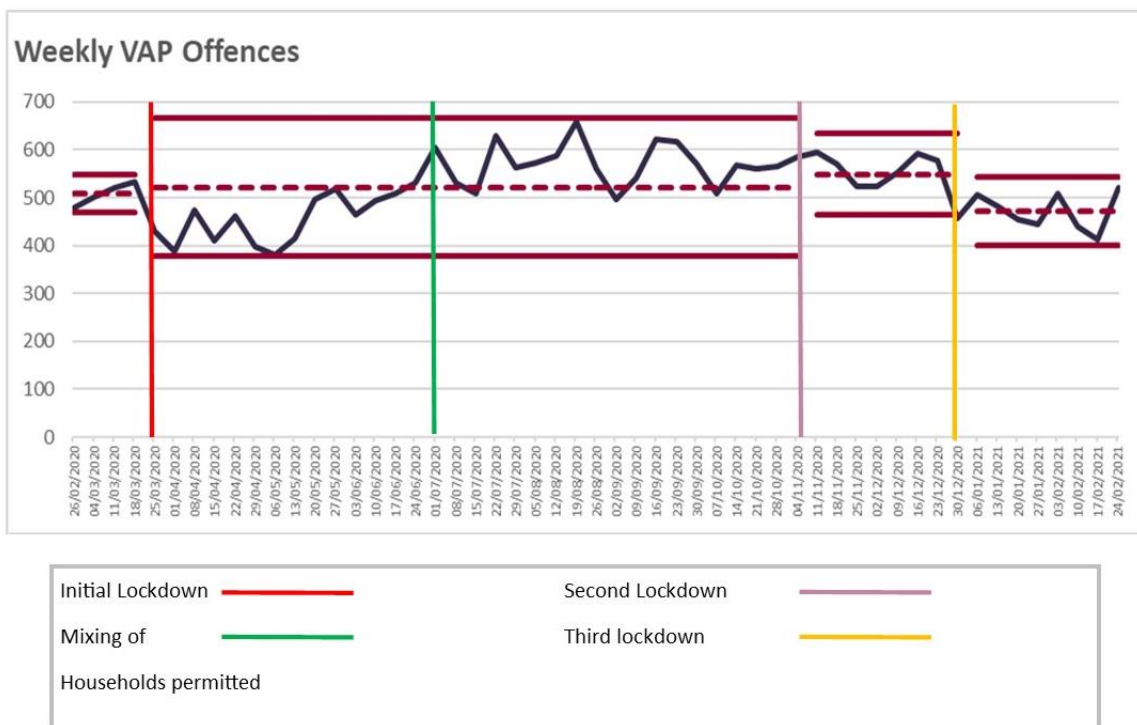


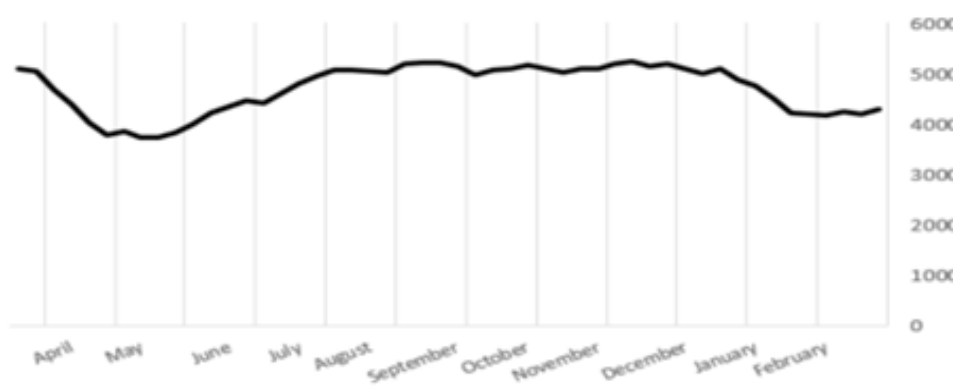
Fig. 12



13.5 Recorded crime dipped during the first lockdown but rose to pre-Covid levels as restrictions eased. A further sharp decline (although not as sharply as in March 2020) took place during the third lockdown. There was no decrease in crime during lockdown two.

Fig. 13

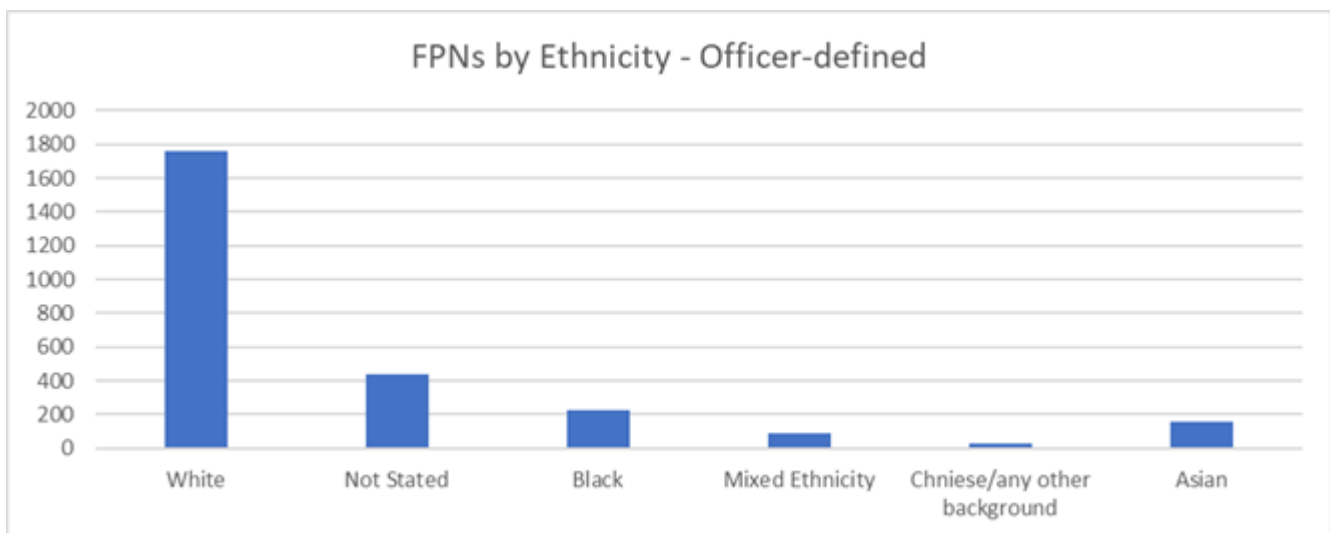
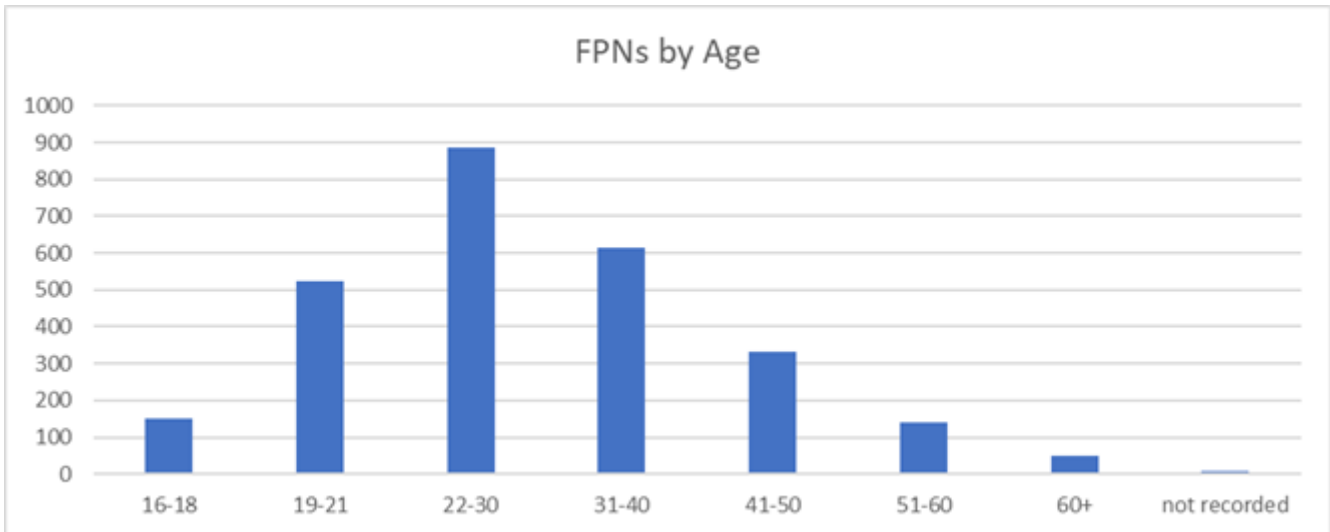
Volumes	2 weeks ago	Last week	Same week last year
Total recorded crime	1021	1097	1211
Total victims	837	888	1047



#### 14 Covid Enforcement

- 14.1 With the introduction of regulations and the ability for officers to utilise 'on-the-spot-fines' or Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), the role of the police service became one of compliance regulation. There was a clear balance to be struck between enforcing regulations and maintaining confidence in the UK 'policing by consent' model. The new regulations saw unprecedented restrictions placed upon the public, including freedom of movement.
- 14.2 Northamptonshire Police's Chief Constable, Nick Adderley, set out clear expectations to all frontline staff in a series of video blogs across the force. Initially, the tone set was one of continuing to engage with the public. This policy ensured Northamptonshire Officers were not taking a heavy-handed approach to enforcement at a point where most members of the public were still trying to understand what they could and could not do.
- 14.3 Early on in the enforcement phase, there were increased reports from the public around Eastern European communities not adhering to lockdown. The designated Community Bronze worked closely with the community leaders, producing communication leaflets in a number of languages to assist in communicating key messages. When reports were received by local authorities or where Northamptonshire Police received unconfirmed reports, letters were written to the householder or business owner informing them of the report of the breach and warning of stronger action in the future.
- 14.4 The younger age bracket (22-30 in particular) received the most FPNs as can be seen from Fig. 14 with the older age bracket being far less likely to receive a fine.

Fig 14



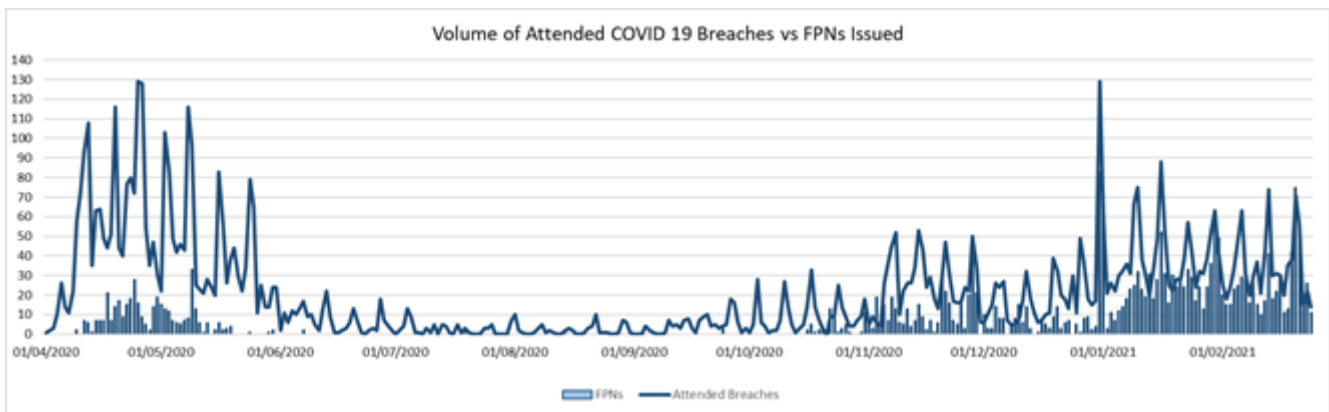
**14.5** Northamptonshire initially followed NPCC guidance in relation to the issuing of tickets for face coverings – they would only be responded to where there were disputes or potential for disorder. Following the outbreak at Greencore in August 2020, Northants Police worked closely with Public Health England and the Local Authorities, identifying public transport in particular as one of the main causes for the transmission outbreak. Officers were directed to attend bus stops on key routes to advise passengers who were not wearing masks whilst at the same time, factory workers and business received messaging from health partners. Within a few days of the outbreak, the Force moved to a more active enforcement phase.

**14.6** Feedback from the public continued to rise in support of stronger enforcement. There was a recognition that most people understood the legislation, but some people were making a choice to simply disregard this at times. The Force moved to a phase of active enforcement, ensuring breaches of legislation (including the

requirement to wear a face mask in certain buildings, such as shops) was enforced where appropriate.

- 14.7 During this period, Northamptonshire Police issued more tickets for face coverings on public transport than any other force except British Transport Police. It issued more tickets for failing to wear face coverings in public than any other force in the country. The Force were one of the first nationally to move from an 'engage, explain, educate' stage to the 'enforce' phase, recognising that the public expectation was that the police would effectively deal with those who continued to put the lives of others at risk.

**Fig. 15**



## 15 Communications

- 15.1 During the first lockdown the Police produced a weekly newsletter to inform key stakeholders of developments with the COVID response and this became an important way of ensuring national guidelines and narrative were presented to communities in an easy to read and informative way.
- 15.2 There was also a weekly Police Q&A dial in with IAG and community leads where questions were answered that had been causing concern within communities. The partnership tasking process was another mechanism to identify vulnerability and target the Police response to areas and sections of the community that were in most need. The communications team worked closely with partners in a Comms Cell under the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) to provide key messaging to the public. Police communications channels assisted public health messaging to the public.
- 15.3 'Facebook Live' events were aired by the Force to assist in informing members of the public of rule changes and to allow communities to ask questions. This was an innovation in interactive engagement and not seen in any other Force across the UK. A total of fourteen events were run with seven hours of live content and questions. These sessions received a total of over 242,600 unique views, over 4,000 comments and over 2,600 likes.
- 15.4 Alongside this, Northamptonshire Police completed the following:
- 32 press releases
  - 131 media queries

- 25 multi-agency press conferences – attended by either ACC Simon Blatchly, Supt. Elliot Foskett or Insp. Ellie Baird
- Weekly media cell meetings with colleagues from Public Health, borough and district councils, NHS and NFRS colleagues and other organisations, including the University of Northampton, Age UK and other third sector organisations
- Weekly, then fortnightly, Head of Comms calls organised by the NPCC, addressing national issues
- Senior Comms Officer seconded to comms cell for three months at start of the pandemic
- 194 internal vlogs by Chief Officers, predominantly the Chief Constable
- 370 internal news items

## **16. Financial Impact**

16.1 COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the finances of all public sector organisations and Northamptonshire Police have been similarly impacted. As highlighted in detail as part of the 2021/22 budget, precept and medium-term financial plan (MTFP), COVID-19 has impacted on future funding streams for Council Tax. That report set out that a range of additional funding support has and will be provided, and where known, these were prudently built into the budget and MTFP. Further details of the financial impact of COVID-19 can be found within the financial update report on Northamptonshire Police which will be considered by the panel.

16.2 Additional costs have been incurred in areas such as:

- PPE equipment;
- Arrangements to safeguard staff and buildings;
- Support for agile working, virtual meetings and different ways of working
- Additional funding to support COVID enforcement

16.3 So far, total costs equate to £1.455m, however, the PFCC and Chief Constable will continue to seek all available funding opportunities to mitigate the impact of any costs on the policing budget. In addition to this, in policing, PPE equipment is now provided directly and paid for by from the Department of Health.

## **17. Recommendations**

17.1 That the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel considers the content of the report.

**Stephen Mold**

**Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

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Darren Dovey  
Chief Fire Officer  
Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

Stephen Mold  
Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

22 January 2021

Dear Mr Dovey and Commissioner Mold,

## **COVID-19 INSPECTION: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

In August 2020, we were commissioned by the Home Secretary to inspect how fire and rescue services in England are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This letter sets out our assessment of the effectiveness of your service's response to the pandemic.

2. The pandemic is a global event that has affected everyone and every organisation. Fire and rescue services have had to continue to provide a service to the public and, like every other public service, have had to do so within the restrictions imposed.
3. For this inspection, we were asked by the Home Secretary to consider what is working well and what is being learned; how the fire sector is responding to the COVID-19 crisis; how fire services are dealing with the problems they face; and what changes are likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognise that the pandemic is not over and as such this inspection concerns the service's initial response.
4. I am grateful for the positive and constructive way your service engaged with our inspection. I am also very grateful to your service for the positive contribution you have made to your community during the pandemic. We inspected your service between 14 and 25 September 2020. This letter summarises our findings.
5. In relation to your service, Northamptonshire's strategic co-ordinating group declared a major incident on 19 March 2020.
6. In summary, the service worked proactively to provide additional support to the community during the first phase of the pandemic. Staff from across the workforce worked closely with partners supporting the needs of their local communities.

7. The service prioritised the wellbeing of its staff. It set up a network at the start of the pandemic to inform its decisions, and increased the size of its wellbeing team. Additional support was provided to those working from home and those carrying out work outside of their normal role. The service used government advice to identify those most at risk from COVID-19, including those from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background, and carried out individual risk assessments to ensure their safety. A system of COVID alerts was introduced to complement communication routes already in place. The alerts were used to ensure all staff were kept up to date with the latest information and guidance.

8. Following on from our first inspection in late 2018, the service put several processes in place to make sure it had the appropriate scrutiny and oversight of fire engine availability and maintenance of competencies. This put the service in a good place to manage its resources. The service maintained critical skills and provided training to 20 wholetime firefighters internally when there was a short notice change in the arrangements at the Fire Service College.

9. We recognise that the arrangements for managing the pandemic may carry on for some time, and that the service is now planning for the future. To be as efficient and effective as possible, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service should focus on the following areas:

(a) It should determine how it will adopt for the longer-term, the new and innovative ways of working introduced during the pandemic, to secure lasting improvements.

(b) It should consider whether the shared plans it uses (such as the Northamptonshire Pandemic Influenza Plan, plans owned by the local resilience forum, etc) are comprehensive enough to meet the specific needs of the service and its community. If not, the service should make sure the plans change to reflect these needs.

(c) It should determine how it can improve its IT and systems so that staff can work effectively remotely.

### **Preparing for the pandemic**

10. In line with good governance, the service had business continuity plans in place. The service had no pandemic flu plan in place but relied upon that of the local resilience forum (LRF). A combination of existing plans was implemented to ensure a command, control and communication structure was established.

11. The plans were detailed enough to enable the service to make an effective initial response, but, understandably, they didn't anticipate and mitigate all the risks presented by COVID-19.

12. The service has started to review its plans to reflect the changing situation and what it has learned during the pandemic.

13. Its plans now include further detail on what elements of the service should maintain response capability if loss of staff is greater than normal. These are the degradation arrangements.



They cover prevention, protection, response and support functions, social distancing, remote working, multi-agency structures, supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), sickness controls and training.

### **Fulfilling statutory functions**

14. The main functions of a fire and rescue service are firefighting, promoting fire safety through prevention and protection (making sure building owners comply with fire safety legislation), rescuing people in road traffic collisions, and responding to emergencies.

15. The service has continued to provide its core statutory functions throughout the pandemic, adjusting its priorities in line with advice from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). This means the service has continued to respond to calls from the public and attended emergencies. It has also continued to undertake prevention and protection work, with a particular focus on individuals, organisations and properties with increased risk and vulnerabilities due to the pandemic. These include rough sleepers and homeless people being held in temporary accommodation, care homes and schools. It was also involved in assessing possible Nightingale hospital sites, and joint messaging with partners.

### *Response*

16. The service told us that it attended fewer incidents between 1 April and 30 June 2020 than it did during the same period in 2019.

17. To reduce the need to move firefighters across the service to crew fire engines, it used local on-call firefighters and only moved personnel from other stations to crew engines to their minimum level.

18. The overall availability of fire engines was better during the pandemic than it was during the same period in 2019. Between 1 April and 30 June 2020, the service's average overall fire engine availability was 81.6 percent compared with 67.2 percent during the same period in 2019. We were told that this was as a result of lower sickness levels and an increased number of on-call firefighters being available to respond to emergencies because they were working from home or furloughed from their primary employment.

19. The service told us that its average response time to fires improved during the pandemic compared with the same period in 2019. This was due to ongoing work to improve availability, lower sickness levels and less road traffic during this period. This may not be reflected in [official statistics recently published by the Home Office](#), because services don't all collect and calculate their data the same way.

20. The service had good arrangements in place to make sure its control room had enough staff during the pandemic. This included upskilling other staff so they could work in control if needed, and strengthening contingency arrangements with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service.

### *Prevention*

21. The NFCC issued guidance outlining how services should take a risk-based approach to continuing prevention activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The service adopted this guidance.
22. The service conducted fewer home fire safety checks and safe and well visits than it would normally undertake. It reviewed which individuals and groups it considered to be at an increased risk from fire as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, it added people living alone, isolated elderly people, and those suffering from domestic abuse as being at increased risk from fire. It carried out proactive work with partners, conducted telephone assessments to triage home safety work, and carried out some face-to-face assessments of the most vulnerable.
23. The service decided to continue offering face-to-face home fire safety checks and safe and well visits on a risk-assessed basis. These were conducted by staff provided with PPE.
24. The service introduced the option of a virtual home fire safety check by telephone instead of face-to-face home fire safety checks and safe and well visits.

### *Protection*

25. The NFCC issued guidance on how to continue protection activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The service adopted this guidance, which includes maintaining a risk-based approach, completing 'desktop audits', and issuing enforcement notices electronically. Face-to-face audits were carried out at the highest risk premises when appropriate.
26. The service didn't review how it defines premises as high risk during the pandemic. But it did target those premises it considers to be the highest risk as a result of the pandemic, such as care homes and accommodation used temporarily, as a result of COVID-19.
27. By doing more fire safety audits virtually than in person, the service conducted more fire safety audits than it would normally undertake. It decided to continue face-to-face fire safety audits and enforcement work on a risk-assessed basis, conducted by staff provided with PPE. It introduced risk-based desktop appraisals instead of face-to-face audits, to minimise face-to-face contact between members of staff and the public.
28. The service continued enforcement activity and issued enforcement notices and prohibition notices. It also continued responding to statutory building control consultations and fire safety concerns.
29. It also introduced other measures to reduce social contact, such as using telephone or email to make the initial contact, completing more desktop appraisals, using video conferencing and adapting visits to limit the amount of face-to-face contact, reducing the risk to staff and customers.
30. No Nightingale hospitals were located in the service area, but the service contributed to the risk assessment of potential sites and physically visited those shortlisted, with partners.

## **Staff health and safety and wellbeing**

31. Staff wellbeing was a clear priority for the service during the pandemic. It proactively identified wellbeing problems and responded to any concerns and further needs. Senior leaders actively promoted wellbeing services and encouraged staff to discuss any worries they had.

32. Most staff survey respondents told us that they could access services to support their mental wellbeing if needed. Support put in place for staff included occupational health, counselling, peer support and access to external resources, including a 24-hour helpline.

33. Staff most at risk from COVID-19 were identified effectively, including those from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background and those with underlying health problems. The service worked with its staff to develop and implement processes to manage the risk. A network was set up to inform wellbeing decisions. A COVID-19 equality impact assessment was produced, and a personal risk assessment carried out for staff who were identified as most at risk. In addition to weekly updates, all staff were kept informed of new advice or guidance via a system of COVID-19 alerts.

34. Wellbeing best practice was shared with other services. The service has discussed with its staff how it should plan for the potential longer-term effects of COVID-19 on the workforce.

35. The service made sure that firefighters were competent to do their work during the pandemic. This included keeping up to date with most of the firefighter fitness requirements.

36. The service assessed the risks of new work to make sure its staff had the skills and equipment needed to work safely and effectively.

37. The service provided its workforce with appropriate PPE, although it did face some challenges in doing so. It participated in the national fire sector scheme to procure PPE, which allowed it to achieve value for money. Where needed, it used sharing arrangements through the LRF, and joint stores provision with Northamptonshire Police to supplement its supply.

### *Staff absence*

38. Absences have decreased compared with the same period in 2019. The number of days or shifts lost due to sickness absence between 1 April and 30 June 2020 decreased by 18.1 percent compared with the same period in 2019.

39. The service issued guidance in the form of COVID-19 alerts so that it could better manage staff wellbeing and health and safety, and make more effective decisions on how to allocate work. This included information about recording absences, self-isolation, and testing. Data was routinely collected on the numbers of staff either absent, self-isolating or working from home.

### *Staff engagement*

40. Most staff survey respondents told us that the service provided regular and relevant communication to all staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included regular virtual team meetings, written correspondence in the form of COVID alerts, one-to-ones with a manager or equivalent, and face-to-face visits with staff about wellbeing and health and safety.
41. The service made use of telephone, email, virtual meeting platforms, COVID alerts and socially distanced station visits when communicating with on-call staff during the pandemic.
42. The service intends to maintain changes it has made to its ways of working in response to COVID-19, including home/flexible working and further improving its technology. It has increased the size of its wellbeing support team, and intends to provide more wellbeing webinars.

### **Working with others, and making changes locally**

43. To protect communities, fire and rescue service staff were encouraged to carry out extra roles beyond their core duties. This was to support other local blue light services and other public service providers that were experiencing high levels of demand, and to offer other support to its community.
44. The service carried out the following new activities: moving the deceased, assisting vulnerable people, delivering PPE, assisting East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust (East Midlands Ambulance Service) and delivering medicines.
45. A national 'tripartite agreement' was put in place to include the new activities that firefighters could carry out during the pandemic. The agreement was between the NFCC, National Employers, and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), and specifies what new roles firefighters could provide during the pandemic. Each service then consulted locally on the specific work it had been asked to support, to agree how to address any health and safety requirements, including risk assessments. If public sector partners requested further support outside the tripartite agreement, the specifics would need to be agreed nationally before the work could begin.
46. The service consulted locally to implement the tripartite agreement with the FBU, Fire Officers' Association, Fire and Rescue Services Association, UNISON and GMB.
47. All the new work done by the service under the tripartite agreement was agreed on time for it start promptly and in line with the request from the partner agency.
48. Any new work, including that done under the tripartite agreement, was risk-assessed and complied with the health and safety requirements.
49. Although no additional payment was made to staff who volunteered for a new role, all staff were paid in line with normal terms and conditions.

50. The service hasn't yet fully reviewed and evaluated its activities to support other organisations during this period. Some evaluation has been carried out by the LRF community resilience cell and East Midlands Ambulance Service. The service hasn't yet formally identified which activities to continue.

#### *Local resilience forum*

51. To keep the public safe, fire and rescue services work with other organisations to assess the risk of an emergency, and to maintain plans for responding to one. To do so, the service should be an integrated and active member of its LRF. Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service is a member of Northamptonshire LRF.

52. The service was an active member of the LRF during the pandemic. The service told us that the LRF's arrangements enabled the service to be fully engaged in the multi-agency response.

53. As part of the LRF's response to COVID-19, the service was a member of the following operational 'cells' that support the LRF's overall strategy to manage COVID-19: strategic co-ordination, excess deaths (mortality management), community resilience, and PPE. The service was able to allocate suitably qualified staff to participate in these groups without affecting its core duties.

#### **Use of resources**

54. In January 2019, governance of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service moved from Northamptonshire County Council to the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. We last inspected the service in late 2018 before the governance transfer and found that there were considerable financial restrictions placed on it. While the service's financial position hasn't yet been significantly affected by COVID-19, it still has limited resources and remains in a difficult financial position.

55. The service has made robust and realistic calculations of the extra costs it has faced during the pandemic. At the time of our inspection, its main extra costs were £85,000 on PPE, £60,000 on staffing costs, and £71,000 on cleaning and decontamination supplies. It also lost £48,000 in training income. It fully understands the effect this will have on its previously agreed budget and anticipated savings.

56. The service received £660,000 of extra government funding to support its response. At the time of our inspection, it had spent £380,000 of this money including on PPE, staffing costs, making premises COVID-secure, and cleaning and decontamination supplies. The remaining money is earmarked for COVID-19-related activity, including IT equipment and further staffing and PPE-related costs. It has shown how it used this income efficiently, and that it mitigated against the financial risks that arose during this period.

57. The service didn't use any of its reserves to meet the additional costs that arose during this period.

58. When used, overtime was managed appropriately. The service made sure that staff who worked overtime had enough rest between shifts.

#### *Ways of working*

59. The service changed how it operates during the pandemic. For example, it developed remote working practices for its prevention and protection activities, and it used virtual technology for meetings, internal communication and training. As a result of its legacy financial issues, the IT infrastructure was not initially in place to fully support virtual working. The service took steps to put in place the necessary IT to support remote working where appropriate. Where new IT was needed, it made sure that procurement processes achieved good value for money.

60. The service was able to implement changes to how it operates. This allowed its staff to work flexibly and efficiently during the pandemic. The service plans to consider how to adapt its flexible working arrangements to make sure it has the right provisions in place to support a modern workforce.

61. The service has had positive feedback from staff on how they were engaged with during the pandemic. As a result, the service plans to adopt these changes in its usual procedures and consider how they can be developed further to help promote a sustainable change to its working culture.

62. The service made good use of the resources and guidance available from the NFCC to support its workforce planning, and help with its work under the tripartite agreement.

#### *Staffing*

63. The service had enough resources available to respond to the level of demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to reallocate resources where necessary to support the work of its partner organisations.

64. Arrangements put in place to monitor staff performance across the service were effective. This meant the service could be sure its staff were making the best contribution that they reasonably could during this period. Extra capacity was identified and reassigned to support other areas of the service and other organisations.

65. All staff were offered an opportunity to support additional activities. This approach was taken because the service felt this was the fairest way to make sure it had the resources it needed to meet its foreseeable risk.

66. As well as performing their statutory functions, wholetime firefighters volunteered for extra activities, including those under the tripartite agreement.

67. The on-call workforce took on extra responsibilities covering some of the roles agreed as part of the tripartite agreement and the shifts of absent wholetime staff. In addition, prevention team staff supported the delivery of medicines on behalf of local pharmacies.

## **Governance of the service's response**

68. There are several different governance arrangements in place for fire and rescue services across England. Each ultimately has the same function: to set the service's priorities and budget and make sure that the budget is spent wisely. Northamptonshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) has responsibility for the fire service in Northamptonshire.

69. The PFCC was actively engaged in discussions with the chief fire officer and the service on the service's ability to discharge its statutory functions during the pandemic.

70. The PFCC and the service maintained a constructive relationship and, during the pandemic, maintained effective ways of working. This made sure the service could fulfil its statutory duties as well as its extra work supporting the LRF and the tripartite arrangements.

71. During the pandemic, the PFCC continued to give the service proportionate oversight and scrutiny, including of its decision-making process. He did this by regularly communicating with the chief fire officer, having a representative of the PFCC at the service's gold meetings, and receiving the service's written briefings. The PFCC visited several fire stations during the pandemic to ensure visibility with staff.

## **Looking to the future**

72. During the pandemic, services were able to adapt quickly to new ways of working. This meant they could respond to emergencies and take on a greater role in the community by supporting other blue light services and partner agencies. It is now essential that services use their experiences during COVID-19 as a platform for lasting reform and modernisation.

73. Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service has further improved its collaboration with local authority partners, the police and the ambulance service and is looking at more permanent ways of working with them. The service is looking at how it can better exchange data with local health partners in the long term to improve its prevention activity. The service developed its use of technology and is considering how virtual platforms and remote working can help it become more effective and efficient. Under the governance of the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, an enabling services project is in place to further develop the police/fire collaboration.

74. Good practice and what worked was shared with other services through several routes. These included regular information exchanges via the NFCC, digital platforms such as Workplace, and regular regional and national forums. Information shared includes risk assessments, strategy documents and comparison of working arrangements. The chief fire officer presented at a national briefing about wellbeing. He also participates in a weekly call between regional senior officers, including East Midlands Ambulance Service. This enabled the senior leaders of these organisations to compare some of the issues being experienced and agree a regional approach. The service has actively engaged in regional and national debriefs and has conducted its own internal process, including a staff survey, to promote further learning.

## Next steps

75. This letter will be published on our website. We propose restarting our second round of effectiveness and efficiency fire and rescue inspections in spring 2021, when we will follow up on our findings.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zoë Billingham". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light grey, textured rectangular background.

## **Zoë Billingham**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary





## **Agenda Item No: 7**

### **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL**

**24<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

#### **Subject: Police Complaints System Update**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Policing and Crime Act 2017 overhauled the police complaints system radically by broadening the definition of a complaint. Previously, a complaint was defined as a “complaint about the conduct of a person serving with the police”. This has now changed to “any expression of dissatisfaction with a police force which is expressed by or on behalf of a member of the public.” A complaint does not have to be made in writing, nor must it explicitly state that it is a complaint to be considered as one.

1.2 Police and Crime Commissioners also now have a much greater role and oversight of the police complaints system. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 gave PCCs the explicit responsibility for holding Chief Officers to account for the way in which complaints are dealt with by the force. In addition to this, the Act gives PCCs the mandatory role of being the review body for appeals and also provides several discretionary options which allow them to undertake an even greater role within the police complaints process.

#### **2. Changes to the Police Complaints System**

2.1 In addition to being the review body for appeals, PCCs have the option to take on some or all of the following responsibilities:

- Receiving and recording a complaint;
  - Initial contact with the complainant
  - Informal resolution of low-level complaints that do contain allegations that could, if proven, amount to misconduct;
- Acting as a single point of contact and communication for the complainant, throughout the processing of the complaint, including providing mandatory 28 days updates in line with IOPC guidance.

#### **3. Handling complaints**

3.1 I have decided to adopt a model which gives my office a much greater role in the initial handling and recording of expressions of dissatisfaction, which

allows us the opportunity to resolve low level 'complaints' without having to resort to a complex and bureaucratic process that can appear impersonal and distant. This model also strengthens my role in holding the chief constable to account, as it gives me a greater insight into how the force is operating and where any weakness or failings may exist. This in turn helps me have a better understanding of the public's concerns and by being more transparent, it will help to increase public confidence in the force.

3.2 Under the new system, complaints can be made by a member of the public who claims:

- That the conduct took place in relation to them; or
- To have been adversely affected by the conduct; or
- To have witnessed the conduct

3.3 Complainants can also make their complaint directly to the police force in question or through others, for example:

- Their MP
- The Police and Crime Commissioner for the force
- A community or voluntary group

A person acting on their behalf can also make the complaint for them, but the legislation states that they will need written consent.

3.4 People can also complain through the IOPC. However, the complaint will then go to the "appropriate authority" to decide how it should be investigated. For most complaints, this is the force itself; if the complaint is about a chief officer or acting chief officer, the "appropriate authority" would be the Police and Crime Commissioner.

3.4 The new legislation allows the appropriate authority to deal with a complaint in a reasonable and proportionate manner, which can include taking no action at all. This removes the bureaucratic and structured approach previously taken in relation to complaints and introduces the reflective practice review process which will focus on learning and improvement.

#### **4. Reviews**

4.1 Following the introduction of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the PFCC is now the relevant review body for less serious complaints. The Independent Office for Police Conduct remain the relevant review body for more serious complaints. The majority of the reviews that are now the responsibility of the PFCC would have been conducted by the Force under previous legislation. This change is intended to increase transparency and independence in the complaints system.

4.2 Upon upholding a review, the PCC is able to make the following recommendations to the Force

- Recommend that the appropriate authority refer it to the IOPC, if the complaint has not been previously referred.
- Recommend that the appropriate authority investigate the complaint.
- Make a recommendation under paragraph 28ZA, Schedule 3, Police Reform Act 2002 (recommendation with a view to remedying the dissatisfaction of a complainant).

4.3 Between February 2020 and February 2021, the PFCC completed 55 reviews. Of these 55 reviews, 7 were upheld and subsequently 8 recommendations have been made to the force. All 8 recommendations have been accepted.

## **5. OPFCC Complaints and Customer Service Team**

5.1 I established a Complaints and Customer Service Team within my office. This small team of three are responsible for recording all complaints against the force, the informal resolution of low-level complaints and for ensuring that all reviews are appropriately processed and considered.

5.2 The Complaints and Customer Service Team are able to focus on quickly and effectively resolving complaints, whilst identifying learning, both for individuals and for the organisation that can be utilised to improve the service we provide to the residents of Northamptonshire.

5.3 I have also adopted a rigorous oversight and accountability process whereby I carry out regular DIP Samples of closed complaint files to ensure that complaints are handled in line with Independent Office for Police Conduct Statutory Guidance and to identify any areas of concern which will be brought to the attention of the Chief Constable through regular one to one meetings and the Force Accountability Board.

5.4 From the outset of the new model, the OPFCC commissioned a service to carry out reviews on my behalf and to make recommendations for my consideration. This approach was taken as it is difficult to determine what the workload this responsibility will generate, and it has given the team time to focus on ensuring that we can deliver an effective complaints and customer service function.

5.5 In the long term, it is still my ambition to bring reviews in house to be considered by a member of staff with an appropriate skill set, who will then make recommendations to me.

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1 That the Northamptonshire Police and Crime Panel considers the content of the report.

**Stephen Mold**  
**Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL**

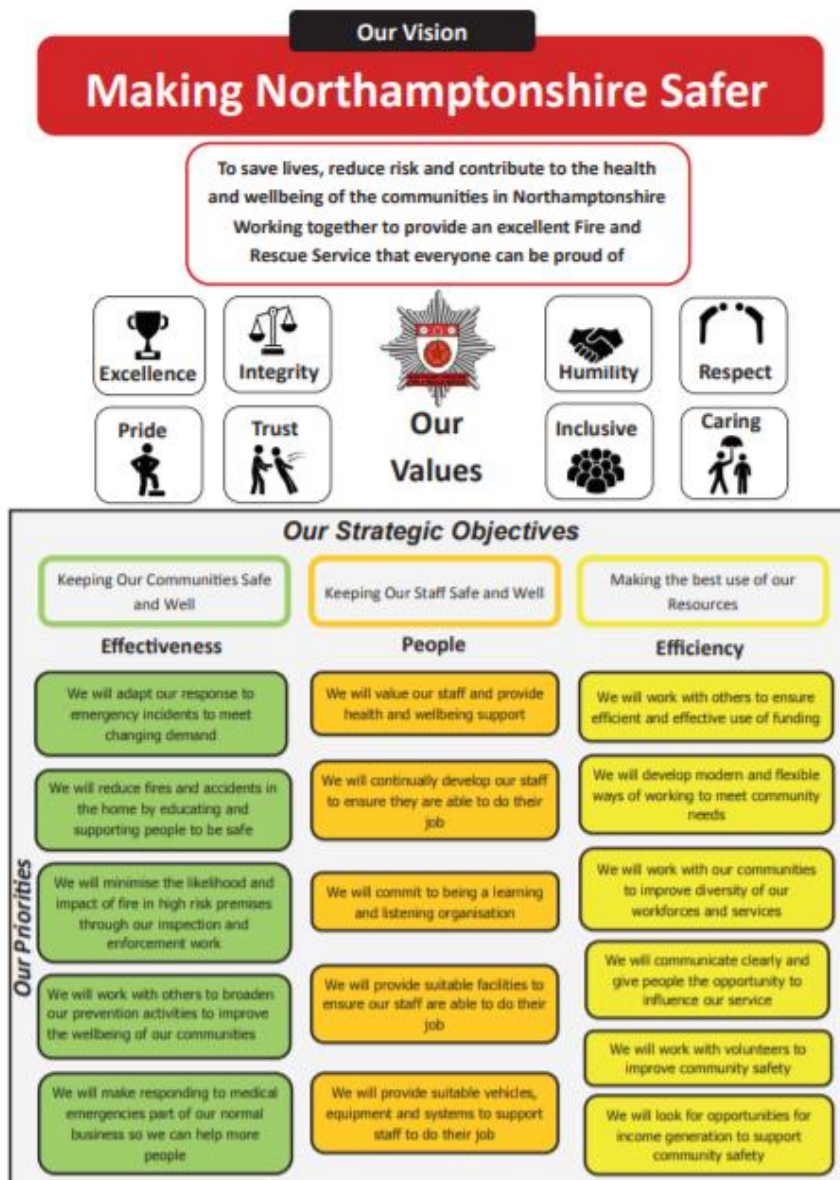
**24<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**OFFICE OF THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER  
FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN UPDATE**

**1. Introduction**

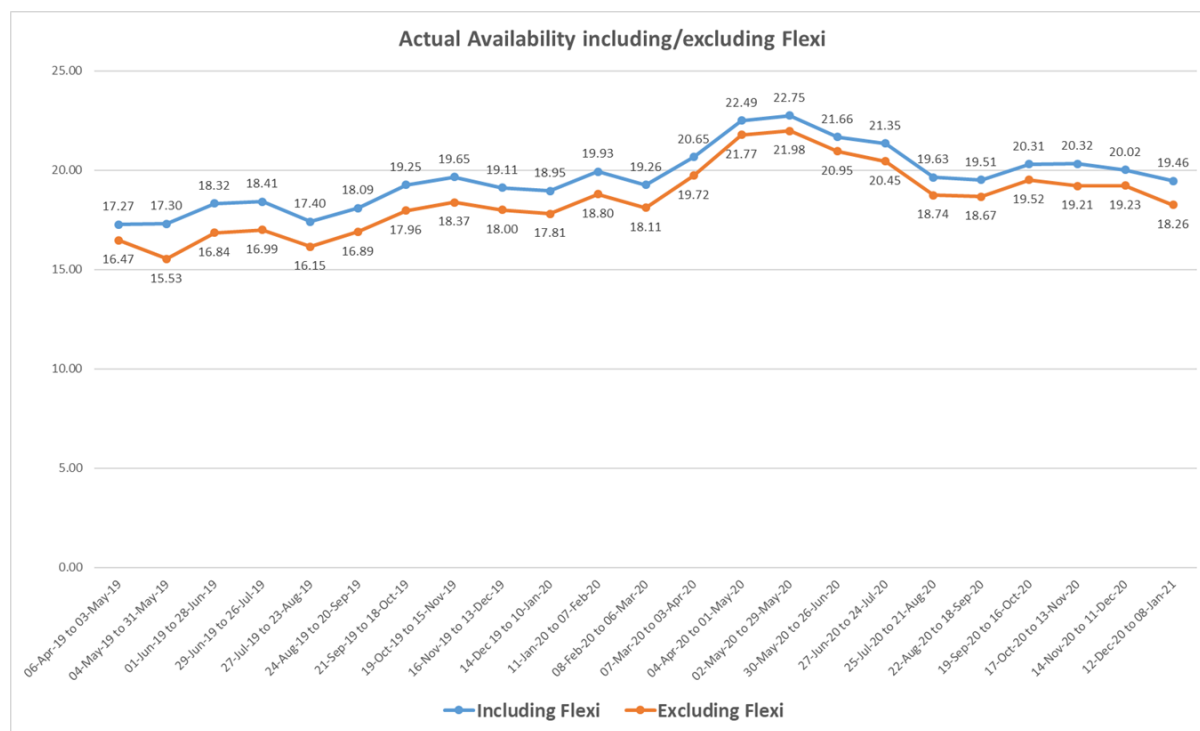
1.1 This report updates the Panel on the work of the Northamptonshire Police and Crime Commission and the progress being made in relation to the delivery of the new Police and Crime Plan for Northamptonshire.

**2. Delivering the Fire and Rescue Plan**



## 2.3 Work Delivered by NFRS

## 2.4 Strategic Response Capability



Average response times to all incidents within the Service have improved month on month since the Governance change to OPFCC. In December 2018, average response times were 11 minutes & 36 seconds; this has now reduced to the agreed SOR time of a 10-minute average to all incidents. In December 2020 it was 10:06 seconds, this slight increase was as a direct consequence of spate floodings experienced across the county during December:

	2017/18 Q1	2017/18 Q2	2017/18 Q3	2018/19 Q1	2018/19 Q2	2018/19 Q3	2019/20 Q1	2019/20 Q2	2019/20 Q3	2020/21 Q1	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3
Fire	00:09:51	00:10:03	00:10:04	00:09:51	00:10:25	00:10:26	00:10:00	00:10:01	00:10:00	00:09:51	00:09:44	00:09:42
RTC	00:11:18	00:10:58	00:11:09	00:11:11	00:11:24	00:11:24	00:11:28	00:11:26	00:11:28	00:10:18	00:11:08	00:10:56
Special Service	00:09:49	00:10:12	00:10:18	00:10:26	00:10:23	00:10:34	00:10:40	00:10:34	00:10:38	00:09:37	00:09:49	00:10:28
All Incidents Average	00:09:59	00:10:12	00:10:17	00:10:12	00:10:31	00:10:36	00:10:23	00:10:23	00:10:25	00:09:49	00:09:53	00:10:06

- 2.5 During the COVID-19 pandemic, firefighters and fire staff have played a huge part in helping colleagues in the emergency services by becoming ambulance drivers. Twenty-two Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service personnel have been trained by East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) to carry out support tasks such as driving urgent care vehicles and the safe moving and handling of patients. The firefighters and fire support staff who volunteered to provide this support are properly protected with the same personal protective equipment and the same infection control measures and access to vaccines as their EMAS colleagues. Up to four staff each weekday are working at Northamptonshire ambulance stations and of the 22 firefighters and staff trained, 14 have been carrying out regular shifts at least once and up to three times a week.
- 2.6 Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service has won praise for its ‘positive contribution’ to the community during the coronavirus pandemic. The service has supported other agencies in a tough year by helping to drive ambulances, deliver food and medicine, check on care homes and homeless people, and transfer the deceased from hospitals to the temporary body storage facility at Wollaston. In August 2020, the Home Secretary asked HMICFRS to inspect how Fire & Rescue Services in England were responding to the pandemic. And in a recent letter to the Chief Fire Officer Darren Dovey, announcing her findings, Inspector Zoe Billingham said: “I am very grateful to your service for the positive contribution you have made to your community during the pandemic.” The report shows how NFRS has managed to balance its COVID response while maintaining its core role of responding to calls from the public and attending emergencies. Firefighters and staff have gone the extra mile to look after the vulnerable and to protect lives in Northamptonshire and I don’t underestimate the pressure that comes with continuing the day job while taking on roles to support other organisations and I thank everyone for the way they have got on with the task in hand. I am glad that the report also notes how well fire and police have worked together in response to the pandemic, and that has laid the foundations for even closer working in the future.
- 2.7 New smoke hoods that are now on every fire engine in the county have already proven a great investment. The hoods offer a one-time use for 15 minutes of protection from breathing in toxic fumes during a blaze. They were first deployed by firefighters from the Mounts, Moulton and Brixworth who attended a first-floor fire at a block of flats in Oakley Street, Northampton in the early hours of January 22. Station Commander Richie Stevens explained that the building was filled with very thick smoke and if they had not had the smoke hoods, there is a good chance that the man and woman who were rescued would have needed medical attention. Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service bought 120 smoke hoods using special funding secured from the Government to support developments after the Grenfell fire.

### **3. Holding the Chief Fire Officer to account**

3.1 The purpose of the Fire Accountability Board is to support the PFCC in exercising the statutory duties of holding the Chief Fire Officer to account and forms part of a wider ranging programme of assurance across the breadth of Fire and Rescue activities.

3.2 The business of the Board covers areas of concern in performance and service delivery at a strategic level, strategic budget setting, medium term financial planning and other matters requiring ongoing levels of assurance.

### **3.3 Fire Accountability Board 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

#### **3.4 Interoperability Update (Fire and Police Joint Meeting)**

Following a meeting in March 2020, the commissioner agreed a programme of work relating to interoperability with the Chief Constable and the chief Fire Officer. A key ambition of the Commissioner in taking responsibility for the governance of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) as well as Northamptonshire Police (NP) was to create efficiencies and better service to the public of Northamptonshire. The Commissioner requested a joint paper and presentation from the two Chief Officers to update on progress in relation to the agreed streams of work. Key areas of focus included: Enabling Services, shared Estates, Shared Prevention Approaches and Interoperability.

On 13<sup>th</sup> October, the Commissioner briefed both NP and NFRS to explore the benefits of NFRS supporting missing persons. This was added to the programme for the Interoperability Board. ACC Andronov provided a report which outlined the progress made in bringing the two organisations closer together from an operational perspective.

**Tri-Service Role** - Initial discussions have been had and further work is now being done to research across the sectors (e.g. Hampshire) to see how this model is developing.

**Joint Community Safety Activity** - Work on a Joint Arson Reduction Strategy is almost complete linking arson offences with serious and organised crime.

**Tri-Service Emergency Service Volunteers** - All three agencies have agreed at the Inter-Ops Board to pursue this joint initiative, in the form of Northamptonshire Emergency Services Volunteer Scheme (NESV). Early discussions have highlighted how each organisation uses volunteers differently and recognises the benefit of bringing them together.

**Joint Command Facility** - At the start of the update the Commissioner made it clear to both organisations that he intends to make a Joint Control Room a Manifesto Commitment, particularly considering the lessons learned from the Grenfell Fire and Manchester Arena Bombing incidents. Both NP and NFRS have decision-points approaching regarding future control room infrastructure. The Commissioner has been explicit in his vision that at a future date NP and NFRS will share a control room, meaning one building, one set of systems and one set of people. The 2 Chiefs have agreed the exploration of this and the vision in principal subject obviously to affordability and operationally deliverable. Further work now needs to take place to scope this.



**High Risk Missing People** - Initial scoping into possibilities has been undertaken which has identified opportunities where NFRS may be able to support NP in searches for missing people. NFRS already have operational guidance in place to support Very High-Risk missing persons through the use of drones, NILOs and crews if required. Whilst the Commissioner recognised the work, he would like to see accelerated delivery of the interoperability agenda. Community safety and vulnerability are real areas of opportunity in his ambition to give a better service to the people of Northamptonshire.

### **3.5 Assurance Statement:**

**The Commissioner welcomed the report from both Chiefs. He expressed his gratitude for the progression of the work relating to shared enabling services. The Commissioner recognised and commended the work that was taking place in the background on the operational interoperability agenda but encouraged the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable to progress this work further, given that there are some areas where they have already agreed in principal with him, that they wish to explore. The Commissioner remains convinced that there are areas in this agenda that provide a real opportunity for the provision of enhanced service to the public. The Commissioner expects work in relation to proposals for a shared Police and Fire Control Room to be developed rapidly.**

### **3.6 Draft budget and capital programme**

The Commissioner required a report outlining the draft budget requirements and capital investment proposals for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service for the financial year 2021/22. Nick Alexander presented the budget report and he and Helen King confirmed that the budget can be balanced for 2021/22, however, significant savings will need to be made and some of them will have risks and impacts as detailed within the paper. HK confirmed that if £5 were available in the precept, the base would increase by circa £930k every year. This would make a significant contribution towards the shortfall. The Chief Fire Officer, HK and NA discussed the recent communications with the Home Office on the challenges. They confirmed the approach the Home office were seeking to make to MCHLG but advised whilst they can lobby for in year spending, influencing the base or the precept requires MCHLG to approve and action. The Commissioner recognised that the settlement was not yet available and that the tax base and council tax deficit information was not yet known. Both HK and NA advised that the impact on 21/22 was sustainable but future years needed to be reviewed. The Chief Fire Officer and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer agreed to review the capital programme and consider whether reprofiling of some of the elements could be undertaken. The programme would then be reworked.

### **3.7 NFRS performance update**

The Commissioner required a report of the performance against the measures and metrics contained within the IRMP. The Chief Fire Officer provided a presentation of the balanced scorecard and associated metrics that are used to determine performance and success. Response times remain positive and average times for all incidents is now well under the 10-minute target; supported by increased pump and on call firefighter availability due to Covid 19. Overall pump availability remains high and call handling times are all below the average 2 minutes allocated for call handling and assignment of resources. The number of Home Fire Safety checks have reduced to the impact of Covid 19 and this is the same for risk-based

inspections. The Commissioner was reassured that the percentage of risk-based inspections in high risk areas remains high and has not reduced.

### **3.8 Assurance statement:**

**The Commissioner welcomed this most recent performance update from the Chief Fire Officer, notably the elements that matter to the public, such as response times and availability of pumps. While accepting of the fact that the Covid 19 pandemic has positively affected things like availability of retained firefighters the Commissioner took the view that many of the improvements underlying these performance measures were genuine and were sustainable in the longer term.**

### **3.9 Fire Accountability Board 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

#### **3.10 Budget and Treasury Management**

The Commissioner required a presentation on the final budget proposals for NFRS for 2021/2022 to include the treasury management and reserves strategy. The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is required to review and adopt a Treasury Management Strategy annually alongside the Budget, Precept, Capital Programme and capital Strategy and publish before 31 March each year. Nick Alexander presented the draft strategy which will also be considered at the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) on 10 March. The Finance Team continues to develop Treasury Management resilience, capability and capacity. The Commissioner reviewed the Forecast Borrowing and Investment balances set out in the document.

Helen King provided a brief update on the local tax base having received the North's notification. There is still a lack of clarity on what the council tax deficit is likely to be. HK and NA will continue to monitor. There was a discussion on savings and a programme has begun to identify plans to deliver the required reductions in budgetary need or savings, including additional pressures and changes to funding. There was also a discussion about the MTFP which has been updated to reflect the latest funding information and challenges faced with the Business Rate and Council Tax. The Chief Fire Officer agreed to review Fire Capital Programme in the light of deliverability and affordability.

HK added that for 22/23 budget cycle for both Fire and Policing, the capital programme will need to finalise at a much earlier stage to enable a complete budget and MTFP position to be completed. Whilst changes are needed on the capital programme, this would also assist in minimising the volatility. It is hoped that the Commissioner will be given latitude within the precept to mandate a £5 increase for Fire and an additional one-off payment will be forthcoming from the Home Office following intensive lobbying to bolster reserves.

The Commissioner commended the extraordinary work that has gone into the maximising savings whilst moving the Service from crisis mode to stable and then towards investment and growth. The Commissioner was assured that everything that could be done had been and remains positive about what has been achieved in the two years since the governance change and what can be achieved in future years.

### 3.11 Assurance statement:

The Commissioner is reassured that the 2021/22 budget will be balanced at either a 1.99% or £5 precept. However, he recognises that the Capital Programme needs to be reviewed and reprofiled and has asked the Chief Fire Officer to do this to ensure it is deliverable and affordable. The Commissioner recognises the challenge over the Medium Term and whilst precept flexibility would assist in this, he recognises the need to ensure that a budget needs to be balanced over a three-year medium-term position and that reserves are not sufficient to do this. As such, he requires the Chief Fire Officer to start to look at how savings and efficiencies can be made to balance the Medium-Term position.

### 3.12 Buildings Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill

Post Grenfell Tower, 2021 will see the enacting of the Buildings Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill. The Commissioner requests a paper and presentation to cover:

- The history of the enactment of these two pieces of legislation
- The key legislative requirements that these will place on NFRS and/or Authority
- The initial thoughts on the implications and impact of these pieces of legislation on NFRS.

Protection Manger Scott Richards provided a report and confirmed this had previously been presented and discussed at FEG. The Building Safety Bill and the Fire Safety Bill represent the biggest change to the countries fire and safety legislation since 2006. The Buildings Safety Bill is likely to become law later this year (Autumn) when it will become the Building Safety Act. It will apply to buildings of more than six storey's and/or over 18m in height. The Bill may apply to some buildings like hospitals as well as residential premises. A new regulator will be created to oversee the safety and standard of all buildings. They will also directly assure the safety of high-risk buildings and improve the competence of those responsible for managing and overseeing building work. The biggest impact of the new process will be on new builds and refurbishments which will have to pass through several gateways to manage the safety of a building by having rigorous oversight of the regulatory requirements.

The gates ways are:

- The planning processes
- The Construction phase which could include a hard stop.
- Final assessment to enable the regulator to issue a completion certificate before

Northamptonshire does not have a significant number of high-rise buildings so an impact on resourcing is not expected however there will be a requirement for additional training given the increased knowledge required. CFO Dovey advised this is likely to be an additional area of focus in the next round of HMICFRS inspections. The Commissioner was assured that the NFRS Protection Team is in a good position and thanked Scott for his leadership in this regard.

### 3.13 Assurance statement:

The Commissioner recognises that both or either of these Bills may result in additional responsibilities and demand for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service. He was

reassured that at this point, without full clarity on dates of the Bills becoming live and the full effects of these two pieces of legislation that NFRS was as prepared as it could be for their inception. He requested that the Chief Fire Officer keep him apprised of the journey of these two Bills and alert him of any significant additional demands that they are likely to have on NFRS, as they progress.

### 3.14 Grenfell Inquiry action plan

The Commissioner requires a quarterly update outlining progress in the delivery of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry action plan against set milestones to include any areas of risk and required investment. Area Manager Phil Pells presents a concise report on the progress made in Q2 along with four recommendations carried over to Q3. The Commissioner was pleased that four of the recommendations carried forward from Q2 had been completed and independently agreed through the recent audit of the Grenfell Action Plan which rated compliance as Good. In Q3, milestone completion dates were set for 13 recommendations (including carry forward of 4 actions from Q2). 12 were completed. Phil Pells provided a summary of the key deliverables in Q3. These included the issue of Smoke hoods and incident Command Wallets and the procurement of digital radios. Recommendations for Q4 milestones are all on track. Overall, progress has been positive, and the Commissioner is content that delivery of the action plan is on track.

### 3.15 Assurance statement:

The Commissioner recognised the work that has been and continues to be delivered on this agenda by NFRS. He was reassured that the actions that had slipped from Q2 had now been implemented and welcomed the fact that progress on this action plan had been assessed as positive independently, via the internal audit process.

## 4. Summary of PFCC Decisions (Fire and Rescue Authority) taken

### **NRFS Decision Record 42- Joint Garage**

**Decision taken:** The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to Purchase a Joint Garage for Police and Fire at a total capital cost of £7.4m including fit out costs.

### **NRFS Decision Record 43- Collaboration Agreement**

**Decision taken:** The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to Agree and sign the Northamptonshire Police & Fire Collaboration Arrangements which is a requirement under the Home Office Financial Management Code of Practice for Police Forces and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners with governance responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 places a duty on emergency services to collaborate and allows policing bodies to take on the responsibility for the governance of fire and rescue authorities. Pursuant to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire (Fire and Rescue Authority) Order 2018 (2018/1072) the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire became the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire with responsibility both for policing and for fire and rescue services in Northamptonshire acting, as appropriate, as the Policing Body for Northamptonshire as well as the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority. The Commissioner and

the Chief Constable consider that it would be advantageous for the police and fire services in Northamptonshire to work closely together. The parties therefore wish to enter into an emergency services collaboration agreement pursuant to section one of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 in the interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of the police and fire services in Northamptonshire.










**NRFS Decision Record 44- Extension of LGSS Services**






**Decision taken:** The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to extend the period in which the services being delivered by LGSS to support the work of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service by LGSS until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. This excludes Health, Safety (include Budget approval) & Wellbeing Human Resources Workforce, Policy and Projects which will end on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2020.

**NRFS Decision Record 45- Joint Fire and Police Vehicle Workshops**

**Decision taken:** The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to purchase the premises based at Baron Avenue, Earls Barton to be refurbished as joint Fire and Police vehicle workshops for the sum of £3.3M (plus VAT). A deposit of 10% will be paid on exchange and the full balance upon completion following the post judicial review period.

## 5. Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service Performance

	2020/21 Q1	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 Q4	2019/20 Q3	Compared to Previous Q3
NI 33 (A) - No. of Deliberate Primary Fires per 10,000 population	0.67	1.47	2.09		3.12	
NI 33 (B) - No. of Deliberate Secondary Fires per 10,000 population	1.55	2.90	3.68		4.56	
NI 49 (1) - No. of Primary Fires per 100,000 population	29.16	58.59	85.20		102.99	
NI 49 (2) - No. of Fatalities in Primary Fires per 100,000 population	0.00	0.13	0.13		0.13	
NI 49 (3) - No. of Non-fatal Casualties in Primary Fires per 100,000 population	1.61	2.54	2.94		2.41	
BVPI 143 (i) - The No. of deaths arising from accidental fires in dwellings per 100,000 population	0.00	0.13	0.13		0.13	
BVPI 142 (iii) - Number of accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings	2.61	4.88	7.41		7.88	
BVPI 207 - Number of fires in non-domestic premises per 1,000 non-domestic properties	1.11	2.35	3.58		4.82	
LPI 8ai Sickness - Wholetime (days/shift lost per head)	1.38	2.48	5.43		5.46	

BV 12 (ii) - Sickness Absence (All staff, excluding RDS)	1.60	3.35	6.34		6.33	
Home Fire Safety Checks and refits completed	306	792	1223		3546	
LPI 77 - Total number of Protective Full Risk Inspections (FI) and Re-Inspections (RI) completed	27	69	170		554	
Percentage of Protective risk inspections in high risk areas (sleeping risk)	88.89%	80.0%	71.11%		69.23%	
Average Full Response Time*	09:49	09:53	10:06		10:23	

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1 That the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel considers the content of the report.

**Stephen Mold**

**Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**





**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL**

24<sup>th</sup> March 2021

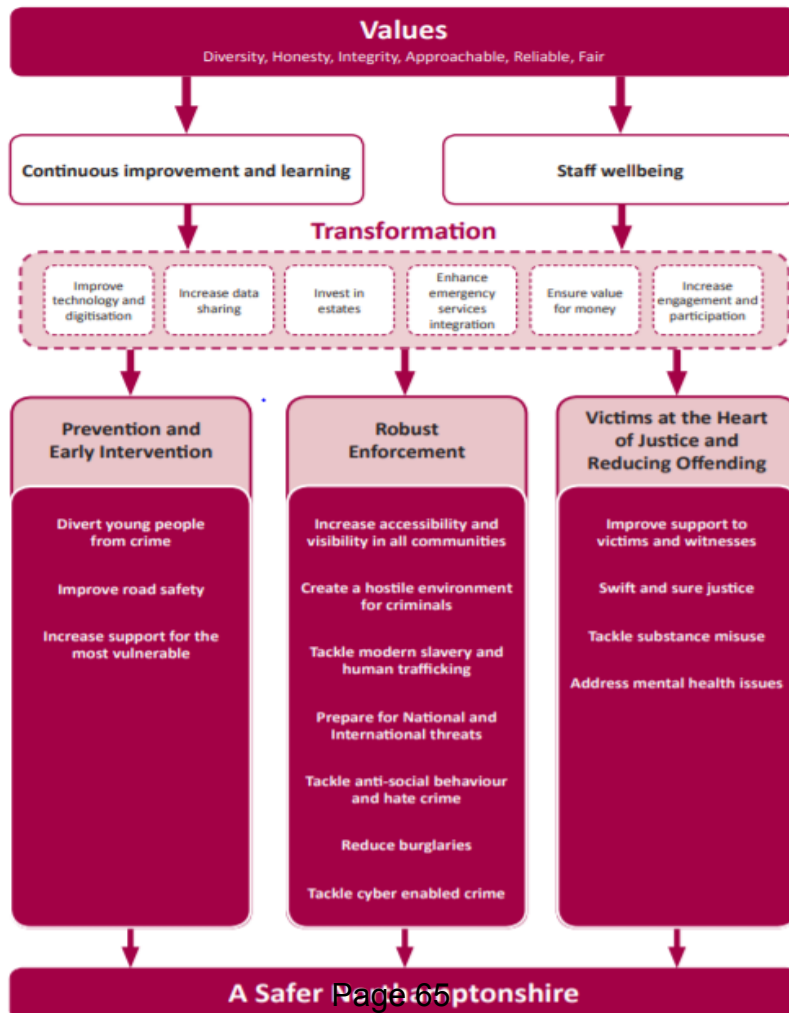
**OFFICE OF THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE FIRE AND CRIME  
COMMISSIONER  
POLICE AND CRIME PLAN UPDATE**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 This report updates the Panel on the work of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commission and the progress being made in relation to the delivery of the new Police and Crime Plan for Northamptonshire which is set out in detail in appendix 1.

**2. Delivering the Police and Crime Plan**

**Plan on a Page**



## **2.1 Transformation**

### **CoPaCC Transparency Award**

My commitment to ensuring the OPFCC operates in an open and transparent manner has again been recognised by CoPaCC who have awarded us with their Open and Transparent Quality Mark. Over the years the process, criteria and rigour of this assessment have been refined and strengthened, to support OPCCs to Improve standards of transparency. The assessment uses the Home Office's 2013 publication Guidelines for PCCs on publishing information, based on the 2011 Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) Order, as the basis for scoring each disclosure requirement - i.e. that the information both exists and is timely. CoPaCC also add a further criterion for assessment, 'ease of use', which considers how easy is it for a member of the public to find the information disclosure. This means it's not sufficient to just make the information available; it should be easy to identify where the information can be found and simple to navigate.

CoPaCC have been very clear that they feel it is not acceptable to simply 'tick the box' of technical and legal compliance and then hide the required disclosures through unclear jargon and complex navigation. They expect to see clear, non-technical language and simple navigation to ensure true public transparency. Northamptonshire was one of just 18 OPCCs in England and Wales that scored very well and were highly commended for their work on this important area of work.

## **2.2 Prevention and Early Intervention**

- **Divert young people from crime**
- **Improve road safety**
- **Increase support for the most vulnerable**

### **Youth Service**

In January 2021 our Targeted Youth Service was a year old. This dedicated team of 11 youth workers is now at capacity and are continuing to support vulnerable children and young people across Northamptonshire. During the last 12 months the team have supported 2647 children and young people through 352 individual detached/street based youthwork sessions in Kettering, Northampton, Wellingborough, Daventry and Corby. These sessions are designed to address the underlying causes of offending steering children and young people away from criminality in the community. The team have continued to deploy throughout the pandemic, supporting vulnerable children and young people to understand the Covid guidance and gain access to face to face support in the community. School based groupwork and 1:1 was paused in late Winter because of Covid restrictions. However, we were able to start programmes in 4 schools delivering to 22 young people and continue Covid compliant 1:1 sessions in the community with 35 young people

This year's delivery will focus on returning to 1:1 and groupwork interventions and targeted support in the communities we have already engaged with to complete works started. We also be adding five new key areas in Rushden, Kingsthorpe, Bellinge and Irthlingborough to begin our action-based research with a view to deploying detached sessions and developing school and community based targeted sessions.

The OPFCC Youth Commission has also been integrated into the work of the team this year and has seen the recruitment of 26 new members whilst also developing 7 peer mentors from last year's recruits to support the new intake. Such was the appetite for young people to apply this year we have also expanded the commission to include 15 schools-based youth commission champions with the aim of helping us to reach their school communities on the topics chosen by this year's intake - water safety and healthy relationships.

The hope of the team is this year with a full complement of staff that we can slowly return, post Covid to our original delivery plans. Our approach is firmly rooted in supporting young people with face to face youthwork, addressing their needs and that of the community by enabling solutions to be developed by young people and the community.

### **Early Intervention**

The ACE team launched in February 2019 to identify families in difficulty at an early stage and to step -in and offer support. To date the team have supported 730 families across Northamptonshire, which means a total of 1,379 children and young people have received support and advice on a range of issues such as domestic abuse, mental health of parent or young person, substance misuse, parenting issues and school exclusions to name a few. Almost half of all referrals to the team (43%) are a result of a Police Public Protection Notification (PPN). During the numerous lockdown periods, the team have received lower numbers of referrals from schools. It is anticipated referrals for support will increase when schools reopen fully. The ACE team have worked throughout the pandemic, supporting families by phone, video conferencing and when permitted, meeting with a young person in school, or in an agreed safe outdoor area.

January 2021 saw the Early Intervention/ACE team grow with two additional practitioners joining the team to support the Multi Agency Daily Risk Assessment (MADRA) project. This project has been put together in response to the growing number of Police callouts for domestic/family conflict related incidents unlikely to result in prosecution. These incidents receive a standard response to the risk presented. The Early Intervention Domestic Abuse ACE Practitioners make contact with every family who has had a police call out for a standard graded domestic incident within 48 hours. The practitioners have extensive knowledge and experience of supporting victims, perpetrators, children and young people who have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse and work in the same way as the rest of the ACE team, uncovering the underlying reason for the incident.

The team have now been supporting adults and families for six weeks and so far have contacted and offered a range of support; offered advice and guidance, safety planning, referral to a specialist domestic abuse support agency or passed onto the wider ACE team for a longer piece of family support work. In just under 6 weeks, 85 families have been contacted with the potential to make a positive difference to 144 children and young people. Through the contact made the following issues have been uncovered as the catalyst for the domestic incident and the subsequent Police Officer call out. Over a quarter of the families contacted said the incident was a result of relationship breakdown. Just under a quarter stated the police were called due to harassment by an ex-partner. A small number of families reported physical or emotional abuse.

Through contact with the Domestic Abuse ACE Practitioner, over half of the families contacted (62%) were given advice and guidance. This includes advice on safety planning in case the incident occurs again or to prevent harm and manage risk to the victim and family, increasing knowledge and understanding of the of services available which offer longer term support, explaining rights particularly around arranging contact time of the children. For those contacted who were given advice and guidance and required further support 14% were referred to a specialist domestic abuse support agency, 10% were passed to the ACE team for family support, 4% of families were referred to MASH due to safeguarding issues being uncovered during the phone contact and 2% of families contacted did not want any support.

When the lockdown restrictions are lifted and it is safe to complete home visits, the team will be offering face to face visits and specialised domestic abuse support which two additional Domestic Abuse Practitioners joining the team in April.

Just under half of all standard domestic abuse referrals (45%) have been for families living in Northampton, followed by Wellingborough (14%), Kettering (13%). Corby and Daventry (9%), South Northants (6%) and East Northants (4%)

In the Longer term, it is our ambition to deliver the following:

- An outcome for all PPN's completed for a domestic incident
- Increase the Force's professional curiosity and knowledge of trauma informed practice
- Better identification and classification of domestic incidents
- Improve consistency of domestic abuse referrals across the county.

## **2.3 Robust Enforcement**

- **Increase accessibility and visibility in all communities**
- **Create a hostile environment for criminals**
- **Tackle modern slavery and human trafficking**
- **Prepare for National and International threats**
- **Tackle anti-social behaviour and hate crime**

- **Reduce burglaries**
- **Tackle cyber enabled crime**

### **Local Policing**

A major new focus on local policing in Northamptonshire will more than double the number of neighbourhood police constables. Police officers in neighbourhood teams across rural and urban communities will be doubled, growing from 50 to 100 over the next 18 months, with an aim to add a further 60 in coming years. These will be additional officers to add to the neighbourhood police and PCSOs already working across the county. Neighbourhood policing will now be at the heart of our fight against crime, with visible, locally accountable policing to tackle the problems that matter to people. This new focus has been made possible by the increased number of police officers in the Force. Northamptonshire Police now has 1367 police officers compared with 1170 four years ago. This means that we can now strengthen our neighbourhood teams without taking resources from emergency response or other specialist areas of crime fighting.

I know how much value people place on knowing that they have a local, neighbourhood policing team dedicated to tackling problems in their area. As our plans develop, we will make sure that every neighbourhood has a dedicated, named local team dealing with the issues that matter to them at the earliest opportunity. I am also delighted to announce that we are also investing in two mobile police stations which will help to provide more visible and accessible local policing in the more remote and rural communities across Northamptonshire.

### **Rolling out ANPR Technology**

Work is ongoing to install 150 new cameras that will more than double the size of the ANPR network in Northamptonshire. The new cameras will increase coverage across rural areas and major towns as well as on the county borders. The cameras mark a £1.3 million investment in ANPR technology as part of a wider strategy to strengthen the response to crime, support road safety and deny criminals the use of the roads. The new camera sites have been chosen following analysis of where they will most effectively support the investigation of crime and were subject to a public consultation before being approved.

The new camera sites are on the county's major, strategic routes and at the county borders, in rural communities and on strategic routes in rural areas, increasing the presence in rural communities and in the county's major towns, including some that currently have no fixed ANPR cameras.

The expanded camera network is part of a wider strategy to strengthen crime fighting and links several initiatives, including the rapid response Interceptor cars. The cameras will also be used to support police activity to tackle antisocial driving and identify uninsured vehicles – research shows that drivers who drive uninsured are more likely to be involved in serious road traffic collisions and be involved in other types of criminality.

I have been very clear that I want Northamptonshire Police to have all the necessary technological support to help them keep the county safe and this major extension to our camera network should send the message that Northamptonshire has no place for criminals to hide. The cameras allow us to monitor vehicles of interest moving around our county and while we have had reasonable coverage in our major urban areas, this investment extends that protection across our rural areas further strengthening the urban coverage but greatly enhancing that in rural communities. I am pleased that we are able to make such a significant financial investment in the safety of this county and I want people to feel confident in the Force's response to crime and its ability to keep them safe.

### **Safer Streets Fund**

Over the Christmas 2020 period, more than 2,000 homes near to the centre of Northampton were given home security packs full of information and items to help them keep safe and prevent crime. Homes in the Portland Place, Kettering Road and Bouverie estate area of Northampton have received the packs as part of a project being run by the OPFCC and funded by a £1.375 million grant from the Home Office Safer Streets Fund. A further 520 homes in part of the area with poorer street lighting and street design will be receiving free crime prevention products such as door chains and letterbox guards, which are being supplied and fitted free of charge.

These packs were in addition to more than 2,000 packs that had already been distributed in the Victoria and Isebrook area of Wellingborough where 600 homes have also been fitted with crime prevention devices. Work is ongoing to consult with local people and fit gates on privately owned alleys that run behind houses. The Borough Council of Wellingborough has supported this work and had been consulted throughout January on the gating of 30 alleys in public ownership to improve security in the area.

In addition to this, as part of the Home Office Safer Streets Fund funding crime-fighting projects the OPFCC are delivering will also see the following three areas see much welcomed investment:

- In Wellingborough £545,700 will be invested in the Victoria and Isebrook wards to provide crime prevention support to residents and to install security gates on alleys behind homes, a crime prevention measure that is proven to reduce burglary, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour significantly.
- In Northampton £550,000 will fund projects to create safer parking and other environmental improvements – including improved lighting – to enhance safety and security in the Portland Place, Bouverie estate and surrounding residential areas near the town centre.
- In Kettering £280,000 will support the extension of the CCTV system in the All Saints area and roll out crime prevention visits to some residents.

These three areas were chosen because they have levels of acquisitive crime such as burglary and vehicle crime that are higher than average for the county.

Work on all three projects is ongoing and being carried out with partners including Northamptonshire Police, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and the three local authorities. Preventing crime is vitally important and it is a privilege to have this funding and be able to spend it with residents on tangible measures that add to the security of their homes and make them feel safer. I want to do everything I can to make Northamptonshire a safer place and this Home Office award will mean we can make physical improvements in these three communities that I hope will have an enormous impact.

## **2.4 Victims at the Heart of Justice and Reducing Reoffending**

- **Improve support to victims and witnesses**
- **Swift and sure justice**
- **Tackle substance misuse**
- **Address mental health issues**

### **Local Criminal Justice Board**

Since March 2020, the Local Criminal Justice Board which I established, and chair continues to draw key criminal justice agencies together to draw up a coordinated response to the COVID pandemic which has had a significant impact on the operation of the local Criminal Justice System. In particular I have both supported and challenged Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) to work differently in order to reduce the backlog of court cases which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Unfortunately, the proposed Nightingale Court proved prohibitively expensive and HMCTS are looking to increase Court sitting hours as their preferred method of reducing the Crown Court backlog. I continue to ensure that politicians nationally are focused on the impact of the backlog; namely that delays in the court process will mean that victims and witnesses may lose confidence in the justice system and decide to disengage from the Court process.

### **Reducing Reoffending Board**

As chair of the Northants Reducing Reoffending Board, I have agreed several priorities aimed at reducing reoffending. My office is coordinating the local refresh of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme. I am funding an IOM project manager who is working to a multi-agency project board (made up of Police, Probation and Local Authority representatives). Next year I have earmarked funding for services to support the coordinated multi agency management of cases within the refreshed scheme. Cases managed by the scheme will include the most prolific local offenders, many of whom cause significant harm to our communities.

### **Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Services**

A further £240,000 will be allocated next year towards Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Services. These funds are pooled with the Local Authority treatment budget and, beginning this year, a single specification is being drawn up detailing the contractual priorities (for both OFPCC and the Local Authority) against which the provider will be held to account. Northamptonshire has been a test bed site for Mental Health Treatment Requirements, and the work undertaken here has gone on to shape national thinking on how best to deliver mental health (and subsequently other) treatment as part of a court order. Early evaluations of this work have identified significant positive outcomes. The OPFCC has been instrumental in commissioning a range of out of court disposals for low level offenders, ensuring that appropriate offenders can be conditionally cautioned to attend a rehabilitative programme, for example for domestic abuse offending, drug or alcohol offending and a special programme for female offenders. COVID has meant that providers of these programmes have had to change their delivery model (to online rather than face to face courses)

### **Victims Organisations**

Further MoJ funding for organisations working with victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence is currently being made available through the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for the new financial year 2021-22. Bids are currently being invited from organisations throughout late February and successful organisations will be announced in late March prior to purdah beginning.

Organisations working with victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence are now able to apply for another tranche of funding made available by the Ministry of Justice in February 2021. Some monies will be used to extend existing temporary funded projects and expressions of interest in some of the other funding opportunities are being sought up until the end of February 2021. These funds are to support local organisations through the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The MOJ have recently informed us that our indicative funding for Victim Services is

<b>Funding for:</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
Local Victim Support Services (core funding)	£813,336
CSA Uplift	£60,592
ISVA Funding	£48,500
Domestic Abuse Support Uplift	£116,971
Sexual Violence Support Uplift	£54,901
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,094,300</b>

### **Project NOVA**

The OPFCC continues to work with Project NOVA which is a project delivered in a partnership between RFEA (forces employment charity) and Walking With The



Wounded (WWTW). The concept of Project Nova is to provide holistic support to veterans who come into police custody, with the aim of reducing offending. The Project NOVA Coordinator who is local to the Northamptonshire area, will co-ordinate and work in direct partnership with NHS Liaison and Diversion Teams who sit within Police Custody, Police staff and officers within custody suites and the community. The Coordinator will provide advice, guidance and support to veterans by using a "Project Nova Network" of military charities and local and national organisations that can assist veterans (depending on their individual needs). The role will be peripatetic in nature and their core focus is diversion at point of arrest, in order to prevent repeat offending and/or a prison sentence. They will primarily provide face to face support to veterans within their home locations. A range of support is offered including assistance with obtaining employment, funding education, housing needs as well as helping access for support with substance misuse and mental health concerns. Project NOVA is already running in 18 other Force areas and they have shown some very positive results. Regrettably there have been delays in starting up this service and we now expect to launch a 12-month pilot project in Northamptonshire in the Spring of 2021.

### **3. Holding the Chief Constable to account**

3.1 The Police Accountability Board supports the PFCC in exercising his statutory duties of holding the Chief Constable to account for the performance of Northamptonshire Police and forms part of a wider ranging programme of assurance across the breadth of policing activities.

3.2 The Board scrutinises areas of concern in relation to performance and service delivery at a strategic level and allows for open and constructive discussions between the Force and the OPFCC in respect of strategic budget setting, medium term financial planning and other matters requiring ongoing levels of assurance.

#### **3.3 Accountability Board Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

#### **3.4 Budget conditions letter update**

The Commissioner agreed a budget conditions letter with the Chief Constable as part of the budget setting process for 2020/21. The Commissioner requested a report outlining progress on the matters agreed in the letter. Additional information was requested in relation to Neighbourhoods and Rural Policing as well as ASB. There has been solid progress on the 'Uplift' recruitment and the Commissioner is satisfied that the Force is on track.

#### **3.5 Assurance Statement.**

**The Commissioner thanked the Chief Constable for the quality of the report received. He sought clarification and assurance on some of the content in order to gain clarity on some additional work that is underway. The**

Commissioner was assured in relation to the robustness of the budget monitoring arrangements that were in place and noted that this had improved significantly in recent years. The Commissioner could see progress being made in many areas relating to the budget conditions letter and overall was assured on this. He was particularly pleased that additional resources would be in place in some neighbourhood policing teams and the rural crime team by the end of November 2020. The Commissioner still required some additional information about how the Chief Constable saw the future of neighbourhood policing in the County and the Chief Constable is producing a paper specifically in relation to this in the next 8-12 weeks. The Commissioner expressed some concerns that progress on plans to deliver greater operational interoperability between Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service were not as advanced as he expected. He was conscious that there was a governance structure in place to oversee this but required some additional reassurance on the speed of progress on this work and asked for a joint paper to be brought to this meeting in December 2020.

### **3.6 Mid-term budget position**

This report was presented in two parts: A mid-term budget update and a presentation on the early considerations and scenarios for the Medium-Term Financial Plan. The Commissioner gave the clear line that any overspend on the Force budget this year will be taken from the Force's budget in 2021/22. The force outlined the Covid-19 costs and grants, and the additional set of Covid grants for lost fees, charges income, and additional enforcement costs for which returns are due by 21 October 2020. The returns will be shared with the OPFCC prior to submission, as they require the Commissioner's sign off. The Commissioner scrutinised and challenged some of the information including overtime.

### **3.7 Assurance Statement.**

The Commissioner noted the Force response to COVID 19 had placed some additional financial pressures on the Force. The Commissioner also noted that this was the case in the Chief Constable's decision for the need to strengthen the leadership of the Force through the introduction of additional Superintendent posts. He noted the contents of the paper and the potential forecast overspend position. Staffing and overtime costs were placing some pressures on the Force budget this year and the Commissioner recognised the efforts being made and processes put into place by the Chief Constable to effectively manage these. As with the budget conditions letter paper, the Commissioner was reassured by the robustness of budget monitoring processes that were in place, the responses he received to questions raised and stated that these had seen significant improvements in recent years. The Commissioner articulated that there would, in the case of an overspend on this year's Force budget, be a requirement to carry that forward into the next financial year.

### **3.8 MTFP scenarios and assumptions**

The Commissioner received a presentation on MTFP scenarios and assumptions from the force to help inform the wider financial context and budget process.

### **3.9 Accountability Board Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

#### **3.10 Draft Budget and capital programme**

The Commissioner was presented with a report outlining the draft budget requirements and capital investment proposals for Northamptonshire Police for the financial year 2021/2022. Vaughan Ashcroft presented the draft Force Budget report and outlined the zero-base budget approach. He also outlined the scrutiny and challenge undertaken in the process. The Commissioner remarked that each year the budget had developed so much that the key points could now be considered and discussed with more clarity and assurance.

The Commissioner and the Chief Constable agreed to continue with the recruitment of the 19 police officer posts affected by the changes to the national uplift profile. However, VA to review the recruitment profile in the year as appropriate. The Commissioner agreed to increase the budget for these. The Commissioner highlighted the circa £600/£700K of pressures that the Chief Constable had implemented within the 2020/21 financial year recognising that he would need to find savings to meet the costs. This included the additional Superintendents and Information posts and the Custody Contract. It was agreed that the Chief Constable will include these in his savings considerations.

There was a discussion about the need to achieve momentum on the disposals within the Estates strategy and both the Commissioner and the Chief Constable advised of their expectations that these would be progressed. In terms of efficiencies, the Commissioner advised that with challenges on the Medium Term Financial Plan, policing need to bridge the gap and cannot keep adding to the costs without building in some efficiencies in the coming years, especially where funding is not increased for inflation and pressures; as is the case for 2021/22. The Commissioner advised he has been considering discussing with the Chief Constable, to look at ongoing efficiencies in the force which could facilitate reinvestment of those efficiencies and embed continuous improvement as part of usual business practice. As a starting point, he suggested 1% of the previous year's budget to give some context, but this was not fixed and his intention in raising this was to start this discussion where he felt this would enable the force to identify areas for efficiency which could be reinvested.

The Commissioner recognised that the settlement was not yet available, and that tax base and council tax deficit information was not yet known;

however, HK had advised if needed, this would be managed to and from reserves. The Commissioner advised that after the settlement, he would be going out for the public's views on the appropriate level of council tax as part of the Precept Consultation – he is mindful of the impact on the public this year and will be looking very closely at their responses. These are expected in mid/late January 2021.

### **3.11 ICO Intervention**

Northamptonshire Police have been working with Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for some time in relation to its compliance with Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SAR) and more recently following a voluntary ICO audit. The Commissioner requested a formal report to provide an update on the engagement with ICO, relating to the voluntary audit, compliance rates with dealing with FOI and SAR requests and an outline of the plan to deal with and address any issues identified. The Force engaged in a voluntary ICO audit in July 2020 during which the Force was assessed against three core areas: Governance and Accountability, Records Management and Training and Awareness. The report from the audit identified several areas where work was needed to achieve compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA18) and other data protection legislation. The ICO are due to return to Force w/c 11<sup>th</sup> January for an interim progress review, during which they are expecting to see significant progress against urgent and high-risk actions, with a further audit review scheduled to take place in May 2021.

There was a discussion about the Management of Police Information (MoPI) legislation. The MoPI Code of Practice defines policing purposes as: (a) protecting life and property; (b) preserving order; (c) preventing the commission of offences; (d) bringing offenders to justice; (e) any duty or responsibility of the police arising from common or statute law. As a direct consequence of the ICO action plan, the Force is also reviewing and improving its compliance to MoPI ensuring that the material retained is appropriate, relevant and helps inform/identify risk providing a more efficient and proficient service to public.

Discussion took place about the volume of SAR and FOI requests received and the increased demand placed on the Force as a result. The Commissioner was interested in spurious ones; adding that whilst the legislation is well meaning, it is a major distraction with some people using it for disingenuous reasons. The Force agreed to provide numbers of spurious FOIs and SARs since change of legislation

### **3.12 Assurance Statement.**

**The Commissioner recognised that progress had been made in this area. The Commissioner sought additional reassurance that progress was continuing in terms of performance and resource recruitment and received**

**this from the Chief Constable. The Commissioner agreed that this was an important part of the business in relation to transparency and was provided with reassurance that plans were in place and on track to deliver and demonstrate good progress to the ICO**

### **3.13 Accountability Board Meeting 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

### **3.14 Draft Budget and capital programme**

The Commissioner requested a paper in relation to the final budget requirements and settlement for Northamptonshire Police for the financial year 2021/2022 to include treasury management and reserves strategies. Vaughan Ashcroft provided an update on any changes that have been made to the report since it was presented for review in December. Details of the police finance settlement for 2021/22 had since been received providing more information. In line with the Spending Review announcements in November, the core grant settlement is set on a flat cash basis, plus the Force's share of budget for the officer uplift. The revised recruitment profile has been adjusted in line with what was discussed at the December Accountability Board. This still meets the previously agreed target under uplift plans but brings more officers into service later in the year to make it more affordable. Precept referendum limits, collection fund deficit and Local Council Tax Support Grant information has now been added to all scenarios for the MTFP. However, some of these figures have not yet been finalised.

The updated Force draft budget requirement was discussed including some key changes which have reduced the budget requirement by £1m. HK provided reassurance that based on latest information, both S151 officers have confidence in the budget and the medium-term financial plan having modelled and stress tested a range of scenarios between best and worst-case positions. The Commissioner requested that agreed efficiency savings for 2021/22 can be incorporated into the budget letter sent to the Chief Constable. In future years, for the lifecycle of the MTP the Commissioner is looking for annual police 1% efficiency savings to make the improvements affordable and sustainable. There was a discussion about the Estate strategy and the length of time it is taking to vacate and dispose of several buildings that have been earmarked for closure. Whilst the Commissioner did not want to compromise operational delivery, he is keen to avoid extra costs and reduce borrowing.

The Commissioner confirmed he is content with the overall numbers in the budget for next year and approved the force budget request of £142.681m.

### **3.15 Treasury Management Strategy update**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is required to review and adopt a Treasury Management Strategy annually alongside the Budget, Precept,

Capital Programme and Capital Strategy and publish this prior to 31 March each year. The Commissioner is required to operate a balanced budget and part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that cash flow is adequately planned. Surplus monies are invested in low risk counterparties providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return. This is regularly reviewed to maximise opportunities

A draft Strategy was circulated in advance of the meeting. The Commissioner regularly engages the services of specialists for investment/borrowing advice, updates on economic factors and credit ratings. Following a review of the report the Commissioner was assured that we are sufficiently balanced in terms of risk. The PFCC approved the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22.

### 3.16 Positive Outcomes

3.17 The Commissioner requested a report relating to the positive outcome rates for the following areas for Northamptonshire Police:

- All Crime
- Burglary (residential and commercial)
- Rape and serious sexual offences
- Violence (all and by category)
- Domestic Abuse
- Knife Crime
- Shoplifting

The Force provided an overview and demonstrated that it had continued its developments in FP25 resulting in a greater sense of ownership and accountability. Expectations are more clearly articulated and understood, and officers are responding positively to this with better quality updates and more frequent reviews by supervisors. Greater ownership of investigations, PIP1 refresher training are having a positive impact. This will be further supported by the additional investment in neighbourhood policing and better use of Restorative Justice.

The Force is closing the gap to the MSG average on overall burglary and has seen significant improvement in its overall rate during 2020. This has been driven by a significant improvement in its positive outcome rate for residential burglary performance.

Rape and Sexual Offences – Positive outcomes now exceeds the MSG and national averages and performance in the last three months is notably stronger than the longer-term picture.

Positive outcomes for Rape offences are steadily increasing and positive resolution rates are well above the MSG average.

Domestic Abuse – The trend for positive outcomes are strongly downward. This is linked to the requirement to record linked/additional crimes which has diluted the overall ratio. The Force have recently undertaken some hypothesis testing and it was made apparent that secondary crime counting rules now account for approximately 28% of all domestic related crimes that are recorded. This is where for example, a victim reports being assaulted, and a subsequent investigation might reveal that the victim was also subjected to stalking or harassment and consequently that is recorded as a secondary crime. Further details can be found in appendix 1.

Violence Against the Person – Largely stable. 35% of violence offences are domestic related but more work to do in this area generally. Knife crime – Trend is moderately downward although no comparative data with other Forces is available. The Force has a new strategy to review possession offences. Knife Crime will be a Force priority this year.

Shoplifting – Crime volumes in Northamptonshire are some of the lowest nationally but positive outcomes are equally low. Other crime types are typically a higher priority however more focus in this area could have a positive impact on all crime types overall.

Drug offences – High level of positive outcomes. In the top half of performance table nationally. 100 doors in 100 days saw significant quantities of drugs and other assets seized, and offenders prosecuted. The Commissioner commended the Force on their work in relations to drug offences.

### **3.18 Assurance Statement.**

**The Commissioner was assured that under the leadership of the Chief Constable and wider Chief Officer Team improvements were being seen in relation to positive outcomes. He was further assured that the Chief Constable has a vision for Northamptonshire Police to become an excellent force and that positive outcome levels needs to form a part of the achievement of this vision. Whilst further improvements need to be made in this area, the force appear to understand where the gaps are and where improvements relating to peer performance need to be made. The Commissioner will require a further update on this subject at a future accountability board.**

## **4. Summary of PFCC Decisions taken**

### **Decision Record Number 187**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to purchase a Joint Garage for Police and Fire at a total capital cost of £7.4m including fit out costs.

### **Decision Record Number 188**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to award a contract with Specialist Computer Centres PLC to deliver a number of IT system updates. The

total price for this contract is £127,872.10. The price is broken down below per project:

- Cyber Essentials- £14,350
- MECM- £45,170
- Exchange and Teams- £68,352.10

#### **Decision Record Number 189**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to agree and sign the Northamptonshire Police & Fire Collaboration Arrangements which is a requirement under the Home Office Financial Management Code of Practice for Police Forces and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners with governance responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 places a duty on emergency services to collaborate and allows policing bodies to take on the responsibility for the governance of fire and rescue authorities. Pursuant to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire (Fire and Rescue Authority) Order 2018 (2018/1072) the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire became the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire with responsibility both for policing and for fire and rescue services in Northamptonshire acting, as appropriate, as the Policing Body for Northamptonshire as well as the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority. The Commissioner and the Chief Constable consider that it would be advantageous for the police and fire services in Northamptonshire to work closely together. The parties therefore wish to enter into an emergency services collaboration agreement pursuant to section one of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 in the interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of the police and fire services in Northamptonshire.

#### **Decision Record Number 190**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to award the contract for the supply of a further 200 Laptops to CDW for the total contract value of £267,796 excluding VAT. This contract is for the next tranche of laptops for the ongoing laptop replacement cycle.

#### **Decision Record Number 191**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to enter into collaboration agreement following a review to continue to provide a regional East Midlands Specialist L&D HUB which will provide learning and development services to Officers and staff within the police forces of the East Midlands region together with the provision of appropriate learning and development services to external customers.

#### **Decision Record Number 192**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to award a contract for the ongoing Support and Maintenance of the existing STORM Command and Control system including a provision for a system 'Health Check' in order to upgrade to SmartSTORM (upgrade free of charge). The services are to be provided by Sopra Steria via call off from the compliant Health Trust Europe ICT Framework ComIT2 for the period of 3 years for the total contract value of £380,396.

#### **Decision Record Number 193**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to agree a revised Voice Service Contract following legal advice from the OPFCC's tax advisers.



**Decision Record Number 194**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to award a contract to Insight for the supply of additional body worn cameras as part of an ongoing replacement programme ensuring they are available to all response and neighbourhood officers and PCSOs. The associated back office system provided by Motorola is a cloud-based body worn video management system allowing captured images to be indigested directly to the force's digital evidence management system allowing direct transfer to the CPS. The contract is for a period of 5 years from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2025 for the total contract value of £1,001,197.24.

**Decision Record Number 195**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to agree a new Single Tender Approval request in relation to the delivery of the OPFCC's delivery of its Safer Streets Work following the successful application for more money from the Home Office of £100,000, giving a total of £350,000.

**Decision Record Number 196**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has taken the decision to allocate the sum of £150,000 from the Safer Roads Reserve budget to a community road safety fund. The community road safety fund is a fund that local organisations such as Parish Councils, schools and other constituted groups can apply to for a small grant of up to £5000.00. The grant can be used to implement local measures to assist that community in addressing an identified local road safety issue.

**Decision Record Number 197**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has, in agreement with the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire, taken the decision to confirm his intention to terminate the collaboration agreement dated 22nd July 2014 created under section 22a of the Police Act 1996 in respect of the Multi Force Shared Service (MFSS), together with the non-lead partners: the Chair and Chief Constable of the Civil Nuclear Authority and Nottinghamshire PCC and Chief Constable. The lead force and PCC for the collaboration is Cheshire. This agreement will expire on the 3rd of November 2022.

**5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 That the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel considers the content of the report and its appendix.

**Stephen Mold**

**Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

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The table below provides a latest assessment on some of the key priority areas which form part of the Police and Crime Plan. The Performance Framework allows for a robust, wide ranging assurance to take place. Ensuring that outcomes are on track and to articulate whether the delivery of services is being providing in an efficient and effective matter.

Measures are being reviewed on a continual basis and latest commentaries on each priority area will be provided within this report on a quarterly/annual basis.

## **Police and Crime Plan Performance Framework Q3 20/21 Update**

<b>Intervening Early &amp; Preventing Crime</b>		
<b>Plan Priority</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>	<b>Commentary &amp; Assessment</b>
Road Safety	Reduce KSI	<p>KSIs remain low and outcome is on target. There were 3 fatalities during Q3, which is 4 less than the same quarter last year. KSI volumes in Q3 have seen a 57% reduction in comparison to the same period last year.</p> <p>In partnership with Highways England and the force, during Q3, the PFCC provided part funding for a project which looks to tackle the offence of tailgating. As part of a trial, close following (tailgating) technology has been installed on the M1 J15a-16, motorists caught tailgating will expect to receive letters advising them they were too close to another vehicle &amp; highlighting the dangers of not leaving safe braking distances. Results of the trial are expected to be available during Q1 2021/22.</p> <p>The £1.3m expansion programme for ANPR coverage in the County continues and camera installation has commenced. It is anticipated that this will have been completed by the spring of 2021, seeing an additional 150 + cameras added to the network of 120 cameras, on the County borders, as well as in urban and rural locations. These cameras can be used to target those that choose to habitually use vehicles that are uninsured as</p>

<p>Domestic Abuse</p>	<p>Respond effectively to domestic abuse</p>	<p>well as tackling criminality across the County.</p> <p>Target not on track. Q3 20/21 has shown signs of domestic incidents returning to more average levels. All domestic abuse volumes dropped by 6% in comparison to Q2, however overall volumes remain high. In Q3 20/21 volumes were 19% higher than the same period last year.</p> <p>The number of domestic abuse offences nationally has increased during the pandemic, however the decline in volumes in Northamptonshire appears to be later than the national trend. This is evident in the national rankings which has seen the county in Q3 drop from 26th to 30th nationally. It is worth noting however that the HMICFRS independent inspection and internal audit processes have demonstrated that the force achieved very high levels of compliance with crime recording and integrity rules relating to this area of business. The Force have recently undertaken some hypothesis testing and it was made apparent that secondary crime counting rules now account for approximately 28% of all domestic related crimes that are recorded. This is where for example, a victim reports being assaulted, and a subsequent investigation might reveal that the victim was also subjected to stalking or harassment and consequently that is recorded as a secondary crime.</p> <p>Based on a 12-month rolling figure, the force recorded an average Grade 1 Urban (G1U) DA response time of 11:52 in December which is the quickest average time over the past 5 months.</p> <p>For the second quarter in a row, evidential difficulties where the victim supports has positively decreased further in Q3 and is currently at 32% (49.10% in Q1 20/21). During Q3, the force applied more emphasis on victim focus and supervision which looks to have had a positive effect. Victim satisfaction with service remains high at nearly 90%. There is active ongoing consideration of how appropriate interventions can be put in</p>
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		place with DA victims to improve opportunities to reduce repeat victimisation between the Force and OPFCC.
Children's Safety	More children are safeguarded	<p>Upward trend of public protection notices (PPNs) logged continues for the period and above seasonal expected levels. PPNs have increase by 28% overall from Q1 20/21.</p> <p>In Q3, 43.7% of all missing children were reports from frequent missing children. This is a sizeable increase from Q2 (38.6%) and above the overall rate from the previous financial year (41.5%).</p> <p>Positive action rates on an upward trend. The Q3 average (31.7%) was 7.30% higher than the Q2 average (24.4%). The positive action rate for the whole of 2019/20 was 26.8%.</p> <p>Over half of missing children come from a care or looked after setting and face very real identifiable risks in relation to criminal or sexual exploitation. This matter is scheduled to be discussed with senior staff from OPFCC/Force and two new Chief Executives from the Unitary Authorities.</p>
Youth Service	Reduction in the number of young people who are not in education, training or employment (NEET)	<p>The Youth Service have been running since January 2020 and are now at capacity with 11 youth workers. Now the team is fully recruited and, in a position, to expand and deliver street based youthwork and targeted interventions into new areas of the county; outcomes measures will be reported from April 2021.</p> <p>Groupwork &amp; 1:1 intervention was halted for several months due to the pandemic, however September 2020 to date has seen the team deliver groupwork programmes for 22 individuals across 3 schools and delivering 1:1 interventions to 18 individuals within Daventry, Kettering, Upton and Wellingborough. Evidential progress of these individuals and new referrals in Q4 20/21 will be provided within the next Performance Framework commentary.</p>

<p>Youth Service</p>	<p>Improvement in behaviour and capabilities of vulnerable young people</p>	<p>From January to December 2020 the team have supported 2,647 children through detached street work and delivered 300 individual detached sessions targeted interventions to provide support for issues such as COVID-19, emotional wellbeing, knife crime, child sexual exploitation, county lines and drug and gang related activity to name but a few.</p> <p>During the pandemic, the team have delivered youthwork provision in 5 different communities within Corby, Daventry, Kettering, Upton and Wellingborough. During this time 85% of interactions have been with children and young people aged between 10 – 15 (15% 16 – 18). 87% of all interactions were white British and 6.5% were from the BAME community.</p> <p>An evidence-based tool designed to show a journey of change for individuals (Outcome STARS) has been incorporated by the team and this will help evidence and measure individuals progress from pre to post interventions with the Youth Service. Progress will be reported within the next Performance Framework commentary.</p> <p>Outcome measures to be reported from April 2021.</p>
<p>ACE Team</p>	<p>Reduce &amp; influence the need for higher cost services</p>	<p>Since February 2019, the team have supported 730 families across Northamptonshire, which means 1,379 children and young people have received support and advice on a range of issues such as domestic abuse, mental health, of parent or young person, substance misuse, parenting issues and school exclusions to name a few.</p> <p>66% of the referrals received were accepted and worked with by the ACE team and by offering this support is helping to reduce demand on statutory services such as Police, Fire, Health and Social Care. The remaining 34% of referrals were not accepted due to the referral not meeting the team’s referral criteria of families having emerging low-level need.</p>

<p>ACE Team</p>	<p>Reduce the likelihood or impact of adverse childhood experience</p>	<p>Currently 94% (661) of the referrals which were accepted for ACE support have been completed by the team, which is helping to reduce the likelihood or impact of adverse childhood experiences across Northamptonshire. As this work continues to evolve and develop, a more detailed breakdown and analysis will be provided to the panel to show the number of cases which either closed with all needs met; closed with presenting needs partly met and the number of cases where new needs were identified by the team and the family were referred to higher need services.</p>
<p>ACE Team</p>	<p>Improve families in their situation and/or ability to deal with it</p>	<p>Over the past 3 months, the ACE team have initiated a family feedback project which aims to provide qualitative feedback about the service and most importantly if the families feel they are in a better place and if they require further support for example.</p> <p>To date 46% of the 39 families who have been contacted have provided feedback of which 94% were happy with the support they received and 78% confirmed that their family were in a better place.</p> <p>This project is ongoing and further detail will be provided in the months ahead. To help continue receiving additional information and feedback on the family's situation, the team have now included obtaining the families permission to be contacted 3 months after the ACE Support has finished.</p>

<b>Fight Crime &amp; Protect People</b>		
<b>Plan Priority</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>	<b>Commentary &amp; Assessment</b>
Officers on the Frontline	Public feel that police are more visible	<p>57.2% of Neighbourhood Officers time was spent out of the station in Q3 20/21. This is on an upward trend (Q1: 51% &amp; Q2: 53.6%) and edging closer to the forces target of 60%. Some locations such as Corby are achieving more than the 60% target, however this is not consistent with other the areas within the county and not where the PFCC and Chief Constable (CC) want it to be. Notable improvement in November and December figures following the agreement between the Commissioner and the CC to increase officers deployed into neighbourhood teams which took place in November. The local policing commander, Chief Superintendent Ash Tuckley is the lead officer for this work and has a comprehensive plan to continue these improvements well above the 60% initial aspiration.</p> <p>At the end of Q3 20/21, grade 1 urban 12 month rolling average response time was 26 seconds above the target of 11 minutes. Times do appear to be getting quicker however there is risk that this target might not be achieved at the end of the financial year. Grade 1 rural 12 month rolling average response times was 57 seconds above the target of 14 minutes. Times generally seem quicker than the same period last year.</p>
Officers on the Frontline	Public feel that police are more accessible	<p>Abandoned rate for 999 calls remain low with Q3 seeing a rate of 0.2%. 101 saw a slight increase in the quarter with a rate of 3.2% (Q2: 2.9%). Both rates remain on target. The target to answer 90% of 999 calls within 10's continues to be met. The average answer time for 101 (triage) calls for the quarter was 4 seconds and remains on target.</p> <p>The Force continue to be on track with the quarterly targets agreed between CC and PFCC for the recruitment of new officers, currently standing at 1,344 (1,341 in Q2). The recruitment progress continues to be on track to recruit over 1,500 Police Officers in the county by March 2023. this will play a major part in assisting the force in increasing</p>



		visibility and accessibility.
Neighbourhood Watch	Public feel supported with interventions available	Currently over 1,000 registered schemes in Northamptonshire, which covers approx. 40,000 households and the scheme continues to seek to grow further in the county with focus on areas that are worst affected by crimes. It should be noted that NHW is not a PFCC function but independent yet a key enabler to increasing safety and cohesion in the County. My office continues to support NHW with funds to attempt to increase its footprint in higher crime locations. An example of this is within the locations subject to Safer Streets Funding interventions.
Neighbourhood Alert	Public feel informed	Membership continues to grow steadily and increased by 4% during the quarter, taking membership to 21,800. Northampton with the biggest increase in membership as PCSOs in the local areas continue to encourage sign up. During Q4 20/21 we are expecting to see membership figures go up particularly around the Wellingborough, Kettering and Northampton areas as a result of the OPFCC Safer Streets work. Over 4,000 security packs were delivered prior to Christmas (each pack contains a promotional Neighbourhood Alert post card).
Victim Satisfaction	Confidence of victims in the system	Increases have been observed across all elements of satisfaction with 77% of victims satisfied overall (Oct 19 – Sept 20), this has increased from 72.8% in September 2019. Ease of contact 12 month rolling average has also shown a notable improvement increasing from 81.1% (Sept 19) to 84.6% (Sept 20). However, despite increases across all elements of satisfaction, the force has identified ‘kept informed’ and ‘actions taken’ for areas of improvement. Survey reporting currently behind schedule due to the pandemic and report with data up to November 2020 to be made available in Q4 20/21.
Victim Satisfaction	Increased victim satisfaction	In September 2020, Burglary satisfaction was at 77.4%, moving the 12-month average to 79.1% which is just short of their 80% target. The 12-month rolling average for Domestic Abuse increased to 88.5% however the force currently falling short of their 90% target. Survey reporting currently behind schedule due to the impact of the pandemic and a report with data up to November 2020 to be made available in Q4 20/21.

<p>Serious Sexual Offence</p>	<p>Respond effectively to serious sexual offences</p>	<p>Recorded levels in Q3 20/21 have seen a decrease by 11% in comparison to the previous quarter. Levels remain high however with volumes 17% above the levels recorded for the same period last year. The force remains a significant outlier against its peers, ranking 8th in MSG for recorded offences. Historical cases continue to contribute towards the increase where the force recorded in November that a third of their performance is weighted by the historical cases and the impact is likely to remain until August 2021.</p> <p>The force has invested in a dedicated team for the investigation of rape and serious sexual offences and offer expertise in dealing with complex investigations. This is starting to have an encouraging effect on positive outcomes which are seeing a gradual upturn across both 'other' and rape offences. Overall outcomes currently around 9% over the last 12 months which is the 3rd best in MSG. Rape outcomes have improved further up to 6% and currently 2nd in MSG.</p> <p>The Force have recently undertaken some hypothesis testing to better understand why levels are as high as they are, in order to deliver a more targeted approach to this. Analysis shows that in relation to sexual offences a significant proportion are child related relating to issues such as “sexting” type offences or sharing inappropriate pictures with each other.</p>
<p>Violent Crime</p>	<p>Reduction in levels of violent crime</p>	<p>Volumes appear to be returning to more normal levels. A 9% quarterly reduction in levels of violence without injury in Q3 20/21, however volumes slightly higher than the same period last year (6% increase). Further still violence with injury with a 13% quarterly reduction in comparison to Q2 and 5% below the same period last year. Approx. 35% of all violence offences are domestic related. Assault occasioning actual bodily harm (AOABH) showing the biggest reduction in Q3 where volumes were 9% less than the same period last year and in terms of violence</p>

		without injury, common assault saw a 10% reduction in Q3 compared to Q2. It is worth noting however that the second national lockdown in November might be a factor into these crime reductions.
Alcohol Fuelled Crime	Reductions in alcohol linked violent offences in night-time economy	<p>Continues to be difficult to accurately reflect to alcohol linked offences. The lockdown restrictions introduced throughout 2020 and into 2021 continues to have a significant impact on the night-time economy where it has effectively been closed for much of the year.</p> <p>Alcohol related offences in vulnerable adults reached an all-time high in Q2 20/21 (894 crimes in Sept for example) however with 2nd national lockdown introduced in November, Q3 20-21 saw much lower levels than the same period last year. Alcohol abuse is known to play a significant factor in vulnerabilities and with the financial recession and when lockdown restrictions start to be relaxed, there is likely to be an increase in alcohol consumption. It can be predicted then that alcohol abuse will continue to play a significant role in crime in the coming months and lead to increased vulnerabilities.</p>
Drug Dealing	Positive activities in reducing street level drug supply	<p>Despite the second national lockdown in November, the gradual increase in terms of drug possession continues in comparison to the same period last year (8% increase). Arrest rates are slightly below the average in line for Q3, currently 13% average for the quarter. The increases in possession offences relates largely to the increased levels of pro activity by the Force.</p> <p>In February 2021, it was announced that a two-year covert police operation to target drug dealing across Northamptonshire secured sentences totalling 221 years. Operation Poetry began at the start of 2019 by the force with the aim of infiltrating 'county lines' gangs. The operation saw £1.3 million worth of drugs taken off the streets and with a total of 72 people convicted during the operation. 18 County lines were also destroyed during the process.</p>

<p>Modern Slavery &amp; Human Trafficking</p>	<p>Reduce all forms of modern slavery &amp; human trafficking</p>	<p>Lower levels were experienced during the initial lockdown period, however with businesses reopening during Q2 &amp; Q3 20/21, volumes appear to be back to expected levels for the time of year. 29 incidents in Q3 20/21 compared to 27 in the same period last year.</p> <p>The Countywide MSHT group, chaired by an OPFCC representative continues to raise awareness of these horrendous crimes in the County, has undertaken an OPFCC funded Crime stoppers campaign in the last quarter and during March 2021, the Force, supported by funding secured from the National Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Network will be undertaking a specific awareness raising campaign in the local logistics sector.</p>
<p>Burglary</p>	<p>Reduction in residential burglaries</p>	<p>The seasonal increase has been evident in Q3 20/21 with December recording the highest volumes of home invasion burglary (HI) in 2020 (175). HI volumes are up by 22% from Q2 and remain broadly the same as Q3 19/20. Based on a 12-month rolling figure, as of Q3, the force has achieved an 8.5% reduction of HI burglary in comparison to the same period last year and are forecasting an 11.7% reduction at the end of the financial year, this is below their 15% reduction target, but is a significant reduction following the near 30% the previous year and demonstrates the ambition to tackle burglary across the county.</p> <p>In terms of business and community burglaries; 20/21 (Q1-Q3) to date has seen a 54% reduction in comparison to the same period last year. It is however worth noting that lockdown, especially in Q1 (62% reduction), is a major factor of such a sizeable reduction.</p> <p>During Q3 20/21, over 2,000 homes across areas in Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough received home security packs which included information and items to help prevent crime. This formed part of the Safer Streets initiative where work remains</p>

		on track to provide further crime prevention devices and installation of security gates on alleys for example.
Burglary	Improved service for victim of burglary	The force has a target of a satisfaction rate of 80% for the service provided to burglary victims. It is currently slightly below this at 79.1%. The past year has consistently seen an upward trend and satisfaction average rates at the same period last year was around 74% Victim satisfaction for being kept informed currently at 56.2%, which is a 7.7% increase in the last 12 months and also the highest it has been for many years.
Cyber Crimes	Reduction in cyber crime	<p>Not on target and upward trend continues. In Q3 the total number of crimes flagged with a cyber element increased by 13% from Q2 and volumes are up by 38% in comparison to the same period last year. Volumes of 'fraud' cybercrimes however appear to be on the downward trend, with the previous 2 quarters seeing on average a reduction of 25% in comparison to the same period last year.</p> <p>Following a successful pilot in the county, a new tool called Police CyberAlarm went 'live' in the country during Q3 20/21. Funded by the National Cybercrime Programme, CyberAlarm acts like a 'CCTV camera' monitoring the traffic seen by a business' connection to the internet. It detects and provides regular reports of suspected malicious activity, enabling businesses to take steps to improve their cyber resilience. Despite the aspiration longer terms to reduce these crimes it is likely that in the short term at least, with the continued proliferation of technology, social media, internet use. This has and continues to change the shape of behaviours, with incidents such as indecent images of children, sexting and stalking being conducted online.</p>
Anti-Social Behaviour	Deal with ASB more effectively	The number of ASB incidents in Q3 20/21 reduced by 22% from Q2, this is the 2nd quarter in a row with a reduction following the initial lockdown period in Q1. Volumes do however remain high this financial year, with a 42% increase in ASB incidents compared to the same period in 19/20. The Covid-19 lockdowns have led to a substantial increase in cases both at a local and national picture.

<p>Hate Crime</p>	<p>Deal with hate crime more effectively</p>	<p>Hate crime during Q3 20/21 has reduced by 22% in comparison to Q2 and is the first decrease since the start of the pandemic. Volumes for Q3 20/21 (376) however are 41% higher than the same period last year and on average there has been a 45% increase from July - December 2020 compared to the same period last year. Reasons for this could be due to lockdown periods prompting a rise in intimidating behaviour from neighbours and the Black Lives Matter movement encouraging the public to come forward and report hate crimes. This will need to remain an area of focus.</p> <p>Despite the decrease in volumes, 11 additional hate crimes had positive outcomes in Q3, meaning the overall Positive Outcome rate for the quarter was 14.1% (8.8% in Q2).</p>
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<b>Victims at the Heart of Justice</b>		
<b>Plan Priority</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>	<b>Commentary &amp; Assessment</b>
VOICE: Victims & Witnesses	Better recovery from victimisation	Referrals volumes into the adult service remain high (2nd highest recorded since VOICE inception) and 18% higher than the same period last year. SLA remains positively high with 96% of victim referrals contacted within 72hrs and VOICE directed over 530 victims living outside of the county to their local support services. 4.6% of valid victim referrals accepted a level of support in Q3; this remains static where on average 4.9% of victims have received support in 20/21 to date.
VOICE: Road Harm	Increased support and satisfaction	<p>KSI volumes remain low in Q3 20/21 and this is reflected in referral volumes into the VOICE road harm service. Volumes have decreased by 17% in comparison to the same period last year. The road harm team received 63 referrals in Q3 20/21, this is 197% more than the total KSIs volumes in Q3 20/21 (32). Reasons for this could be due to multiple referrals received per KSI, referrals for matters that happened outside of the county or historical matters. As a comparison, in the same period last year, 96% of all KSIs were referred into the road harm team.</p> <p>14 Hours of counselling &amp; therapy sessions were held in Q3 20/21; this is significantly below the same period last year where 161 hours were held. This decline can be attributed to the current low KSIs volumes and the pandemic restrictions. The road harm team continue to be flexible in supporting all clients virtually or face to face (prior to lockdown 3). Several examples of client compliments were provided during the quarter and really emphasised the improvement made in the client's health, wellbeing, empowerment, ability to cope and their general gratitude of the service.</p>
VOICE: Witness Care	Increased support and satisfaction	Target to provide an increased level of support on track with witness attendance rates in Q3 remaining at around 90%. Unsuccessful cases in Q3 due to victims failing to give evidence improved by 27% in comparison to the same period last year.

		<p>The VOICE Witness Care Unit referrals continues to rise as the impact of Covid-19 on the Criminal Justice System continues to have an unprecedented effect on caseload volumes. April to December 2020 has seen an 80% increase in caseloads (1153 to 2076). The rate of case increase in Q3 has however started to show signs of levelling off.</p>
VOICE: Restorative Justice	Better recovery from victimisation	<p>Restorative Justice (RJ) referrals continue to be low due to Covid-19. 4 Referrals received in Q3, 2 of which have accepted support. Appetite generally remains low; however, this is a similar pattern across the country.</p> <p>It is worth noting that at a recent board meeting, the Chief Constable recognised the value of RJ in terms of being an effective method of achieving a positive outcome and to increase satisfaction with some victims. Moving forward, this will be a focus for the expanded Neighbourhood Policing teams.</p>
VOICE: Children & Young People (Child Psychology Service)	Better recovery from victimisation	<p>Children &amp; Young People's services have generally seen referrals volumes dip during the Covid-19 lockdown period. Q3 20/21 volumes (1,164) saw a 15% reduction in comparison to the same period last year. The speed of service continues to see a marked improvement with 99% of individuals in Q3 being contacted within 48hrs of a referral (94% in Q2 20/21). Accepted support remains low but stable and in line with previous quarters. Over 40 hours of counselling &amp; therapy sessions were held during the quarter; an increase of 48% from the previous quarter.</p>
Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (Sunflower)	Better recovery from victimisation	<p>Q3 20/21 shows an 11% increase in referral volumes in comparison to the same period last year and volumes have increase by a further 5.5% from Q2 20/21. Despite the increase in referrals, those accepting support remains consistent with an average of 38% during 20/21 to date (35% Q3 20/21). The speed of service remains high, with 99% of individuals being contacted within 48hrs.</p> <p>Referrals into the MARAC service has seen a decrease of 6.3% compared with Q3 19/20, however the current quarter has seen a 17% increase in cases being heard at MARAC hearings. Notable improvement with how risk is now being managed compared to the</p>



		<p>same period last year. Additional meetings have been implemented to ensure referrals are being heard in a timelier fashion.</p> <p>Victim satisfaction surveys have currently been stopped during the Covid-19 pandemic and updated commentary on victim's satisfaction with the service will be provided once surveys resume.</p>
Swift & Sure Justice	More efficient & effective system	<p>Not on track, however similar pattern across the country as outstanding workloads continue to increase nationally. Northampton Crown Court outstanding workload has increased by 19% from March - December 2020, this is considerably below the Midlands (33%) and national (29%) average. Northampton Magistrates Court however is above the national average (19%) and an outlier with a 30% increase in workloads since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>In terms of confiscation enforcement performance, 2019/20 saw the county recorded the 11th highest amount recovered (£3.06M) and was outperforming its counterparts in terms of size of force and performance. The impact of Covid-19 on the current 20/21 confiscation enforcement figures has seen national levels 40% less than the same period last year. To date, Northamptonshire has achieved only 22% of what was recovered at the same period in 19/20.</p>
Substance Misuse	Fund an effective referral treatment service from the Criminal Justice system.	<p>Current reporting arrangements provided by Change Grow Live (CGL) not adequate and frequent enough. Clearer contract outcomes and arrangements required and to be reviewed with provider. The PFCC funding currently provides for daily coverage at Northampton Magistrates &amp; Crown courts to access the sustainability and carry out assessments for Alcohol Treatment Requirements (ATR) and/or Drug Rehabilitation Requirements (DRR). This is work that will continue to better establish the value being achieved from this investment.</p>

<p>Mental Health</p>	<p>To provide a more appropriate service for service users and help to reduce police time spent on mental health related incidents.</p>	<p>Q3 typically brings together several seasonal and emerging situational risks. The use of S136 in Q3 remains high but those people returning straight back to the community with no further action or being admitted is now falling. This can indicate good response to guidance being provided by the force. As of December 2020, there has been a 36% increase in the last 12 months in terms of use of S136 powers and a 75% increase in the number of mental health flagged incidents.</p> <p>In February 2021, the Commissioner funded for an extension to the existing Op Alloy programme. In addition to the 2 community psychiatric nurses (CPN) already provided, the extension will see a further 2 CPNs added and working 7 days a week. As a result, the extension is likely to see a bigger decrease in the number S136s, more effective and informed S135s undertaken, and a significant reduction in officer's time spent waiting at hospitals across the county. The extension will also allow officers to have greater access to mental health professional's advice and information, enabling service users to be taken and referred to the most appropriate service. Evaluations of the extension will be reported in the new financial year.</p>
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**Agenda Item No: 10**

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL**

**24 MARCH 2021**

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COMMISSIONER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**FIRE - 2021/22 FINANCIAL UPDATE AND FORECAST OUTTURN**

**AS AT 31 JANUARY 2021**

**REPORT BY THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1. This report sets out at a high level, the forecast financial outturn for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, together with a financial update. This is the second full year operating as Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (NCFRA) following the governance transfer on the 1 January 2019.
- 1.2. The forecast outturn is based on two months of estimated data and, therefore, is still subject to change at year end. The forecast is monitored monthly and work is already underway on the closedown process for 2021/22. The outturn position is usually tabled at the July Panel meeting each year.
- 1.3. The audit of the 2019/20 NCFRA accounts remains in the final stages of completion.

**2. Forecast Summary Revenue Outturn as at 31 March 2021**

- 2.1 As at the end of January 2021, there is a forecast underspend of £159K on the NCFRA revenue budget. When additional Business Rates are included, this increases to £272K.
- 2.2 This is lower than the forecast of £373K which was included within the Budget and Precept considerations in February 2021, due to increased COVID-19 costs which have now been forecast based on known information until year end. The PFCC has applied for additional funding to meet these costs from the Home Office which is detailed further below.
- 2.3 There remain a number of prudent forecasts. During the year, all budget holders have been asked to be mindful of the future financial climate for Fire in budget management this year. Therefore, whilst COVID-19 restrictions continue, it is possible this underspend will increase further.

- 2.4 Due to statutory timescales, the NCFRA precept and budget must be set before Business Rate forecasts are finalised by the local authorities. It is envisaged that government support will mitigate the impact on Rates and excess funding has been identified.
- 2.5 A prudent estimate of additional Business Rates financing of £113K for 2020/21 has now been assumed in the funding outturn. In keeping with the Reserves Strategy, any additional rates funding will be transferred to a financing reserve and used to smooth the impact of financing changes and Business Rate deficits in future years.
- 2.6 A number of the devolved budgets are now showing underspends for the year, particularly wholetime, retained firefighters and training. These underspends are offset by overspends in ICT, unrealised investment and commercial income, a £100K contribution to reserves and additional COVID-19 costs.
- 2.7 The summarised position as at January 2021 and the forecast outturn is as follows:

Budget Group	Original Budget	Current Budget to Date	Exp Incl Accruals	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Outturn Variance	Dec Prior Outturn	Variance
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Response Control	735	613	670	804	69	65	4
Response Retained	2,122	1,768	1,616	1,885	(237)	(186)	(51)
Response Wholetime	13,209	11,008	11,019	13,169	(40)	(69)	29
Business Planning & Performance	188	157	152	186	(2)	(2)	0
Commercial	(53)	(44)	(27)	(31)	22	22	0
Community Prevention	424	353	344	432	8	21	(13)
Community Protection	507	423	433	524	17	18	(1)
Corporate Budgets	1,771	1,476	1,368	1,823	52	22	30
Engineering Services & Stores	1,511	1,259	1,190	1,477	(34)	(26)	(8)
ICT & Communications	1,142	952	1,364	1,192	50	64	(14)
Occupational Health	140	117	98	120	(20)	0	(20)
Property	1,464	1,220	1,187	1,434	(30)	(24)	(6)
Securing Water Supplies	60	50	55	64	4	4	0
Strategic Leadership Team	955	796	713	885	(70)	(72)	2
Training	766	638	534	642	(124)	(93)	(31)
Service Information Team	278	231	231	278	0	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	30	25	0	130	100	100	0
Commissioners Contingency	120	100	0	23	(97)	(97)	0
Interest from Investment	(50)	(43)	(2)	(5)	45	43	2
Specific Grants	0	0	711	128	128	9	119
<b>Total allocated budget</b>	<b>25,319</b>	<b>21,099</b>	<b>21,656</b>	<b>25,160</b>	<b>(159)</b>	<b>(201)</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Funded by:</b>							
Council Tax Precept	15,478	12,899	0	15,478	0		
Council Tax Surplus	167	139	0	167	0		
Business Rates & S31 BR Support Grant	8,488	7,073	0	8,601	(113)		
Pensions Grant	1,186	988	0	1,186	0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,319</b>	<b>21,099</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25,432</b>	<b>(113)</b>		
<b>Total Variance (Underspend)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>(272)</b>	<b>(272)</b>		

2.8 Key Variances are:

- Wholetime staffing is based on staffing and overtime profiles, the latter of which has been impacted by COVID-19.
- The Control overspend is due to additional strength being added at the beginning of the financial year to add resilience.

- Retained staffing is forecast to underspend due to reduced costs following the COVID-19 impact in the latter half of the year.
- Reductions in Commercial budget income has continued throughout the year as other Fire & Rescue services have postponed courses.
- A number of budget variations are now being estimated in Community Protection, Prevention, Occupational Health, Property, Engineering, Stores and Corporate Budgets.
- An overspend has previously been identified in ICT due to increased licence and other costs. This, and the unrealised interest income is offset by underspends in the Commissioner's contingency.
- Training costs are lower than budgeted due to changed profile of courses. Commercial Income has also reduced due to COVID-19, but this is partially offset by Sales, Fees and Charges grant.
- Interest income has been significantly impacted by the reduction in interest rates and this is reflected within the forecast.
- The Chief Fire Officer's (£63k) contingency is forecast to be fully spent by the year end.

2.9 A key priority during 2020/21 has been to seek to minimise the budget volatility which was experienced since the governance transfer.

2.10 The Chief Fire Officer has been proactive in communicating this to Fire budget managers, encouraging them to highlight potential pressures and savings at an early stage in order to help inform decision making, together with reinforcing the

2.11 Whilst financial forecasts during 2020/21 have become less volatile overall, work continues with all budget managers with an emphasis in ICT, Property and Training to improve this further.

### **3. Financial Impact of COVID-19 on NCFRA**

3.1 COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the finances of all public sector organisations and NCFRA have been similarly impacted.

3.2 As highlighted in detail as part of the 2021/22 budget, precept and medium term financial plan (MTFP), COVID-19 has impacted on future funding streams for Business Rates and Council Tax. That report set out that a range of additional funding support has and will be provided, and where known, these were prudently built into the budget and MTFP.

3.3 This report sets out the additional financial costs of COVID-19 and needs to be read in conjunction with the COVID report on the agenda.

- 3.4 Additional costs have been incurred in areas such as:
- Direct support as part of the local resilience work in Northamptonshire. This includes delivering services on behalf of or together with other organisations (for example: mortuary work, ambulances, prescription deliveries, vaccine and testing support);
  - PPE equipment;
  - Arrangements to safeguard staff and buildings;
  - Support for agile working, virtual meetings and different ways of working
- 3.5 In October 2020, the Panel were advised that following the receipt of Tranche 1 COVID-19 funding, the Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, was proactive in raising the challenges and the potential impact of COVID on NCFRA and its low level of reserves.
- 3.6 The OPFCC worked closely with the service and the Home Office and wrote to Lord Greenhalgh, Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire and Communities at Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Home Office. In his letter, the PFCC highlighted his concerns and outlined the potential implications of COVID-19 on the financial standing for NCFRA.
- 3.7 As a result, a second tranche of funding was received, and the total received from Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 was £661K. This has helped towards engaging with and supporting the response in Northamptonshire and extra costs associated with the requirements needed to ensure a safe and secure environment and support agile working to enable Business as Usual to continue.
- 3.8 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have undertaken a recent review of the COVID-19 arrangements, during which they recognised the proactive approach taken by NCFRA to understand the potential financial impact and to secure financial support to help address it
- 3.9 NCFRA has also taken an active role in influencing national work to actively forecast the financial impact of COVID on Fire. This has enabled the PFCC to make representation for additional funding.
- 3.10 Where possible, the cost of supporting other services (e.g. ambulance) has been met by those services directly. However, even when these are reimbursed, NCFRA picks up additional costs of covering their roles, together with mileage and some other costs.
- 3.11 To date, NCFRA have received funding of £661K and by 31 March 2021, costs are forecast to be £789K. This is £128K in excess of funding provided. Therefore, the PFCC has submitted a further claim as part of the Home Office Mutual Aid Funding process in February 2021. At the time of writing, this outcome is still awaited. Should funding not be provided, the additional costs will be met from within the 2020/21 budget.
- 3.12 Furthermore, NCFRA are forecasting a potential impact for 2021/22. At this point in time, additional costs of £131K are forecast, although these will vary according to the progress and impact of the pandemic. The PFCC has made the Home Office aware of these estimates, however, at the current time, only proposals for 2020/21 are being considered.

3.13 The profile of expenditure to date can be highlighted as:

Cost Area	2019/20 & 2020/21	2021/22	Total
Staffing	362,053	82,000	444,053
Personal and Protective Equipment (PPE)	186,329	44,000	230,329
Social Distancing, Buildings, Agile and Compliance Related	280,294	5,000	285,294
Fuel Savings	-40,000		-40,000
<b>Total Forecast Costs</b>	<b>788,676</b>	<b>131,000</b>	<b>919,676</b>
Funding Received	-660,502	0	-660,502
<b>Additional Funding Requested</b>	<b>128,174</b>	<b>131,000</b>	<b>259,174</b>

3.14 Furthermore, NCFRA have received the sum of £29K towards six months of lost income, sales, fees and charges and the opportunity for a further submission later in the year.

#### 4. Capital Programme

4.1 As set out in the precept discussions, a draft capital programme has been prepared as part of the budget and MTFP to ensure essential investment can take place.

4.2 However, due to many years of under investment in this area, the requirements and thus costs are significant. The Chief Fire Officer is currently reviewing the plan to balance essential requirements, together with affordability and deliverability.

4.3 Progress against the Capital Programme is included in the monthly budget monitoring report which is scrutinised and reviewed by the PFCC and his officers. This report is considered more formally at the Accountability Board regularly throughout the year.

#### 5. Assurances and Controls

5.1 A number of internal audits took place during 2019/20 as the first NCFRA Internal Audit Plan. The 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan is also well underway. To give coverage and assurance to the PFCC and statutory officers, the audit plan is targeted towards areas of uncertainty, risk or internal control areas where assurance is required.

5.2 Whilst the Chief Internal Auditor's overall audit opinion for 2019/20 was satisfactory and recognised good progress in establishing a control environment for the new organisation, he highlighted that the areas for improvement identified during the audits needed to be taken forward as a priority to ensure this opinion level could be maintained.

5.3 The Fire three year stability plans are based on NCFRA having in place a known, understood and reliable internal control and assurance framework. The Internal Audit plans and outcomes for this period are showing a number of internal control areas that need to be addressed and improvements implemented to support the requirements of a single service organisation of NCFRA's size and nature.

5.4 The outcomes and areas for improvement identified from the Internal Audits are considered by the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) and progress on implementing the recommendations is monitored at every meeting throughout the year.

5.5 The Chief Finance Officer, the PFCC and the JIAC feel further improvements in internal controls are still required. As such, they continue to work closely with the Chief Fire Officer and his team to take forward recommendations and improvements and to

improve compliance with policies and procedures and embed these practices in the service.

- 5.6 A number of activities including refresher budget holder and procurement training have taken place and senior managers are engaged in considering the recommendations and findings and taking forward solutions. The work to improve and embed internal controls will continue.

## **6 2021/22 Budget and the Medium-Term Financial Position**

- 6.1 Following precept discussions at the February 2021 Police, Fire and Crime Panel, the PFCC was advised that NCFRA would not be given precept flexibility for 2021/22. However, as set out in his response to the Panel's report on the proposed precept, he advised that:

*"Following the meeting, the Fire Minister approved the sum of £2 million to be provided to Fire in recognition of our unique circumstances following the governance change, together with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on our financial stability plans. **This equates to £1m to support the revenue budget and £1 million to support reserves.** However, we have also been advised that unfortunately MHCLG will not allow any precept flexibility given for 2021/22. Whilst this flexibility would have gone some way to addressing the challenges, it does mean that I do not have to put the pressure on local taxpayers this year. "*

- 6.2 Whilst this additional support is welcome and has enabled the 2021/22 budget to be balanced without savings, NCFRA face financial shortfalls in the medium term.
- 6.3 Alongside work to balance the medium Term Financial Plan, the Panel can be assured that the PFCC and officers will continue to work closely with the Home Office to try and secure a permanent increase in base funding for NCFRA in future years. The Panel will continue to be updated as part of the financial monitoring reports throughout the year.

## **7. Recommendation**

- 7.1 That the Police, Fire and Crime Panel considers the forecast financial outturn and update.





**Agenda Item No: 11**

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL**

**24 MARCH 2021**

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER  
2020-21 FORECAST FINANCIAL OUTTURN AND UPDATE - POLICING  
REPORT BY THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1. This report sets out at a high level, the forecast financial outturn for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, together with a financial update.
- 1.2. The forecast outturn is based on five months of estimated data and, therefore, is subject to change. The forecast is monitored monthly and will be updated and refined to reflect latest information as the year progresses.
- 1.3. External audit of the 2019/20 accounts commenced in November 2020.

**2. Forecast Summary Revenue Outturn as at 31 March 2021**

2.1 At this stage in the year, there is a net forecast underspend of £1.209m as follows:

<b>Budget Heading</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Outturn</b>	<b>Variance (P10)</b>	<b>Variance (P7)</b>
Budgets Managed by the Chief Constable	136,162	135,960	- 202	98
Budgets Managed by the PFCC	6,773	5,443	- 1,330	- 641
Capital Financing Costs	3,736	4,059	323	- 677
Budgeted Transfer to Reserves	100	100	-	-
	<b>146,771</b>	<b>145,562</b>	<b>- 1,209</b>	<b>- 1,220</b>

- 2.2 As set out in earlier reports, an additional revenue contribution to capital has been assumed (subject to final outturn) to help reduce capital financing costs on the revenue budget in future years.
- 2.3 Based on the current forecast, there would be an underspend remaining of £1.2m which could be transferred to reserves or used to invest future expenditure or further support the capital programme if required. The PFCC will determine this as part of the year end considerations.
- 2.4 In line with the PFCC's expectations, the Chief Constable has made good progress in reducing the overspend he forecast in July 2020 and is now projecting a £202K underspend. Of significant assistance in this has been the additional funding received for COVID-19 and this is set out later within the report.

- 2.5 As part of the PFCC precept in 2019/20 and the national police officer uplift over the last two years, the PFCC has prioritised the recruitment of additional police officers for Northamptonshire, increasing police officer establishment in the county to 1367 by 31 March 2021. This is a significant undertaking and the PFCC regularly scrutinises progress and takes assurance from local and national update reports, which currently assess the Force as on target.
- 2.6 The PFCC set out in his precept proposals the intention to recruit 76 officers in 2021/22 rather than the 57 assumed within the settlement.
- 2.7 Funding for the uplift officers is only provided when officers are recruited and the settlement for 2021/22 continues the Government funding commitment for 57 additional officers. Funding has been allocated at a sufficient level to meet the uplift officer costs in 2021/22 and the PFCC is committed to ensuring that officers can be maintained at 1500 level for as long as possible.
- 2.8 The forecast outturn as at January 2021 is as follows:

Budget Heading	Budget £000	Outturn £000	Variance £000
<b>Budgets Managed by the Chief Constable</b>			
<b>Non-Devolved Budgets</b>			
Police Pay and Oncosts	71,385	71,507	122
Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's)	3,231	3,066	- 165
Police Pensions	890	701	- 189
	<b>75,506</b>	<b>75,274</b>	<b>- 232</b>
<b>Devolved Budgets</b>			
Enabling Departments	22,778	22,535	- 243
Collaboration Units	7,124	7,013	- 111
Devolved Operational Budgets	21,238	21,564	326
Control Room	6,292	6,191	- 101
Corporate Services	3,224	3,517	293
	<b>60,656</b>	<b>60,820</b>	<b>164</b>
	<b>136,162</b>	<b>136,094</b>	<b>- 68</b>
Agreed transfers from reserves		- 134	- 134
<b>Budgets Managed by the Chief Constable</b>	<b>136,162</b>	<b>135,960</b>	<b>- 202</b>
<b>Budgets Managed by the PFCC</b>			
<b>PFCC Office Budget</b>	1,624	1,432	- 192
Contribution to Governance costs from Fire	- 329	- 284	45
	<b>1,295</b>	<b>1,148</b>	<b>- 147</b>
<b>PFCC Delivery Budgets</b>			
To support victims and reduce crime	1,962	1,848	- 114
To support early intervention work	572	569	- 3
To support early intervention youth project provision	464	448	- 16
To support youth provision and youth offending	691	584	- 107
To support domestic and sexual abuse provision	320	162	- 158
To support reducing reoffending	500	168	- 332
Research and Analysis	83	41	- 42
Public Involvement and Communications	97	50	- 47
To support Operational Delivery, Accountability and Digital	146	82	- 64
To support complaints arrangements	133	123	- 10
To support crime prevention	250	100	- 150
	<b>5,218</b>	<b>4,175</b>	<b>- 1,043</b>
<b>Police and Crime Plan Delivery Fund</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>- 140</b>
<b>Budgets Managed by the PFCC</b>	<b>6,773</b>	<b>5,443</b>	<b>- 1,330</b>
Capital Financing Costs	3,736	4,059	323
Budgeted Transfer to Reserves	100	100	-
<b>Total Policing Budget</b>	<b>146,771</b>	<b>145,562</b>	<b>- 1,209</b>

2.9 Key variances following the October report are as follows:

#### **Budgets Managed by the Force**

- The Force forecast is based on a detailed January review, together with prudent assumptions and forecasts.
- Underspend has arisen in Enabling Services from reduced fleet costs and savings from delayed restructures. There has also been underspend released for MFSS costs previously anticipated, but no longer required in the year.
- Devolved Operational Budgets include Local Policing, Crime, Intelligence and other operational teams are now forecast to overspend by £0.3m, much less than previously envisaged due to additional COVID-19 funding received.
- The overspend in corporate services mainly relates to the cost of the enabling services project team which is funded for up to two years from reserves whilst new ways of working are implemented and embedded.

#### **OPFCC Managed Budgets**

- As work continues to bring together Policing and Fire Enabling services teams, the PFCC has sought to identify efficiencies within his own office. Consequently, he has restructured and reduced both the cost and size of the OPFCC team for current and future years. This, together with the impact of timings on recruitment, has increased the underspend on the Office budget. This has also enabled the contribution from Fire to be reduced.
- In the delivery budgets underspend has mainly arisen due to the timing taken to finalise recruitment to the Youth Team established in 2019/20, together with new resources appointed to support Multi Agency Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (MADRA) process as provided for in the PFCC's budget priorities for 2020/21.
- A further underspend has been released in the delivery area of reducing reoffending where funding set aside in the budget to work on Integrated Offender Management (IOM) arrangements with partners have been significantly impacted by COVID. It is possible that these arrangements may slip further, and the underspend will increase in this area.
- Underspend has been released in Crime Prevention as the majority of costs from the Safer Streets Fund Initiatives can be met from Grant funding.
- Underspend has been released from the Police and Crime Plan Delivery Fund as allocations have been impacted by COVID. It is possible this will increase further and if it is not spent by year end, it will be transferred to reserves and ring fenced for future use.

#### **Capital Financing Costs**

- As set out earlier in the year, to help mitigate the future impact on the Revenue Budget, additional revenue contributions have been assumed in the outturn.

### **3. Safer Streets Funding**

- 3.1 At the beginning of 2020, the Home Office launched the Safer Streets Scheme, with funding available for Police and Crime Commissioners to bid against. This grant stream was set up to support initiatives to tackle crime in areas particularly affected by acquisitive crime such as burglary, vehicle crime and robbery. The funding is intended to go towards measures that are proven to cut crime, including changes to the street scene such as locked alley gates and better lighting, and the installation of CCTV.
- 3.2 The PFCC bid for three projects totalling £1.375m to fund crime fighting projects in Wellingborough, Kettering and Northampton where the levels of acquisitive crime were higher than average for the county and all three were successful.
- 3.3 The three bids are as follows:
- To implement a range of security improvements on the Victoria and Isebrook wards in Wellingborough.
  - To support the extension of town centre CCTV in Kettering as well as the proposal to install a small number of secure alley gates
  - To fund projects to create safer parking and other environmental improvements in the Portland Place, Bouverie estate and surrounding areas of Northampton.
- 3.4 Funding must be spent by 31 March 2021 and work is well progressed. As several other PCC offices have returned funding mainly due to these tight timescales, the Home Office awarded the PFCC a further £100K for the Northampton project.

### **4. COVID-19 Grant and Forecast**

- 4.1 COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the finances of all public sector organisations and Policing has been similarly impacted.
- 4.2 As highlighted in detail as part of the 2021/22 budget, precept and medium term financial plan (MTFP), COVID-19 has impacted on future funding streams for Council Tax. That report set out that a range of additional funding support has and will be provided, and where known, these were prudently built into the budget and MTFP.
- 4.3 This report sets out the additional financial costs of COVID-19 and needs to be read in conjunction with the COVID report on the agenda.
- 4.4 At the end of 2019/20, the PFCC set aside the sum of £500K from reserves to meet the costs not funded by grant. It was previously anticipated that all this sum would be required, but additional funding has recently been awarded to mitigate this.
- 4.5 Additional costs have been incurred in areas such as:
- PPE equipment;
  - Arrangements to safeguard staff and buildings;
  - Support for agile working, virtual meetings and different ways of working
  - Additional funding to support COVID enforcement

- 4.6 In December 2020, the Panel were advised that funding for Police had been limited. However, since that time, funding of £1.144m has or will be provided.

	PPE £	Surge Enforcement Grant £	Lost Income £	Unspecified / Not Funded £	Capital	TOTAL £
<b>Grant Funding</b>						
Grants Received	(214,558)	(286,155)	(90,450)			(591,163)
Additional Grants - Northants share of £58million				(553,233)		(553,233)
<b>Total Grants Received and Assumed</b>	<b>(214,558)</b>	<b>(286,155)</b>	<b>(90,450)</b>	<b>(553,233)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(1,144,396)</b>
<b>Expenditure 2019/20</b>						
PPE	46,930					46,930
Overtime				6,135		6,135
Other				4,990	626,575	631,565
	<b>46,930</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>11,125</b>	<b>626,575</b>	<b>684,630</b>
<b>Expenditure 2020/21</b>						
PPE	169,772			6,963		176,735
Overtime		140,421		90,045		230,465
Other			98,432	235,318		333,750
	<b>169,772</b>	<b>140,421</b>	<b>98,432</b>	<b>332,326</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>740,950</b>
<b>Total Cost to Date</b>	<b>216,702</b>	<b>140,421</b>	<b>98,432</b>	<b>343,451</b>	<b>626,575</b>	<b>1,425,580</b>
<b>Further Expenditure Forecast</b>						
PPE				10,000		10,000
Overtime		20,000				20,000
Other						-
	<b>-</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>30,000</b>
<b>Total Cost Forecast to 31/03/21</b>	<b>216,702</b>	<b>160,421</b>	<b>98,432</b>	<b>353,451</b>	<b>626,575</b>	<b>1,455,580</b>
<b>Net Cost after grants</b>	<b>2,144</b>	<b>(125,734)</b>	<b>7,982</b>	<b>(199,782)</b>	<b>626,575</b>	<b>311,184</b>
<i>NB. Reserves Earmarked for Covid-related costs</i>						<b>500,000</b>

- 4.7 Total costs equate to £1.455m, which equates to an additional cost of £311K, of which some was spent in 2019/20 and other costs have resulted from brought forward agile equipment purchases which were within later years of the capital programme
- 4.8 There is currently sufficient funding left within the £500K reserve ring fenced to meet further costs. However, the PFCC and Chief Constable will continue to seek all funding opportunities to mitigate the impact of any costs on the policing budget.
- 4.9 Costs for 2021/22 have not been forecast at this stage. In policing, PPE equipment is now provided directly from the Department of Health for which they bear the costs.

## 5 Capital Programme

- 5.1 Progress against the Capital Programme is included in the monthly budget monitoring report for Police which is scrutinised and reviewed by the PFCC and his officers. This report is considered more formally at the Accountability Board regularly throughout the year.

## 6. Recommendation

- 6.1 That the Police, Fire and Crime Panel considers the forecast financial outturn and update.

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL**

**24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**

**REPORT BY THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES ASSISTANT MANAGER  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**James Edmunds**

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Handover to the Northamptonshire Police, Fire &amp; Crime Panel appointed for 2021/22</b>
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>That the Northamptonshire Police, Fire &amp; Crime Panel identifies any points arising from the recent experience of carrying out its role that it wishes to hand over to the Panel appointed for 2021/22.</b>

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The report is intended to enable the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel to consider the recent experience of carrying out its role and to identify any lessons learnt or similar matters that it wishes to hand over to the Panel appointed for 2021/22.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The current meeting is the final scheduled meeting of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel (the Panel) before the formal establishment of new local authorities in Northamptonshire on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and elections both to these authorities and for the role of Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. These events will potentially result in change for the Panel: in particular, local government reorganisation is likely to bring new councillor members onto the Panel for 2021/22 and will require a new host authority for the Panel to be identified.
- 2.2 In light of this, the current Panel previously identified that it could usefully use this meeting to consider any matters such as learning from its recent experience that it wished to hand over to the Panel appointed for 2021/22. The new Panel will not be obliged to agree with any points relayed by its predecessor and will be responsible for determining its own work programme and operation. Equally, any such decisions about what the Panel scrutinises and how it does this can benefit from building on previous experience.

**3. Overview of Panel operation 2020/21**

- 3.1 The Panel in its current form has operated since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 when the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC) took responsibility for the governance of Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service. This automatically resulted in the Panel's remit being expanded to scrutinise and support the PFCC in carrying out the range of his responsibilities. The Panel remains one of only five Police, Fire & Crime panels in England, the others being the panels for Essex, Greater Manchester, North Yorkshire and Staffordshire.

3.2 The Panel has carried out the following main activities during 2020/21:

- Held 6 formal meetings including the current one (made up of 5 regular Panel meetings and one confirmation hearing)
- Produced 5 reports to the PFCC (on the PFCC's Annual Report and Fire & Rescue Statement in July 2020; on the proposed 2021/22 precepts for Police and for Fire & Rescue in February 2021; and on the proposed appointment of a Chief Fire Officer in October 2020).
- Recruited and appointed independent co-opted members to serve on the Panel from 2020/21 to 2023/24.
- Carried out task-and-finish scrutiny work on the future operation of the Panel and on the development of the PFCC's Police and Fire & Rescue budgets for 2021/22.
- Held a detailed briefing session with the Chief Constable on policing demand and performance in Northamptonshire.
- Changed over to remote meetings for all Panel meetings, task-and-finish working group meetings and briefing sessions to enable business to be conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The webcasts of the 5 Panel meetings held before this one have received a combined total of 407 views.
- Continued to engage with its counterparts in other force areas through involvement in the East Midlands Police (Fire) & Crime Panels Network and in the National Association of Police, Fire & Crime Panels.

3.3 The Panel's outline work programme for 2020/21 indicating the business conducted at each of its regular meetings during the year is included with this report (at Appendix 1).

#### **4. Best practice for Police, Fire & Crime Panels**

4.1 There is not one prescribed way in which Police (Fire) & Crime panels should operate within the parameters and requirements set by legislation and in practice panels have a considerable amount of flexibility to adopt local approaches that work for them. At the same time, such approaches should take account of guidance that is produced by relevant bodies on what represents best practice.

4.2 The Panel does seek to do this and the task-and-finish scrutiny work on the future operation of the Panel referred to in paragraph 3.2 above aimed to review the Panel's existing operation in light of the latest Local Government Association (LGA) guidance on Policing and Fire Governance to identify any opportunities for improvement.

4.3 It is not proposed that the Panel should attempt to repeat this exercise at the current meeting. However, points that the current Panel may wish to hand over to its successor could relate to recommended best practice. It may therefore be helpful to re-iterate the following paragraph from the LGA guidance, which seems to summarise its view of the principles involved in effective panel operation:

*“Effective panel operation rests on clarity of role, proper prioritisation and sound use of resources. Panels’ statutory duties require careful planning to fulfil. They rest on panel members carrying out work and background research in order to ensure that those*



*statutory tasks are effectively managed. For these reasons, panel activities should in all events be justified by reference to those statutory duties, alongside a clear articulation of how the activity in question will directly contribute to those activities.”*

## **5. Potential areas for consideration by the Panel**

- 5.1 A review by the current Panel of its recent experience of carrying out its role with a view to informing its successor can be characterised in simple terms as the Panel considering what work it has done in 2020/21 and how it has done this work. The remainder of this report sets out some possible areas for consideration in this regard. These are intended to help to provide a structure and starting point for discussion by the Panel not to restrict it to these areas only.

### **What work has been done by the Panel**

Prioritising the work programme and balancing different elements

- 5.2 The Panel is required to carry out some specific functions – scrutiny of the PFCC’s proposed precept, Annual Report or Police & Crime Plan – but otherwise has considerable flexibility to identify the topics it wishes to consider and how these can be incorporated into its work programme. At the same time, there is an onus on the Panel to decide between competing priorities and to ensure that as far as possible it uses available capacity to best effect. The Panel may want to consider whether there are any learning points on this matter that it can take from its experience in 2020/21. Related to this is the question of how the Panel balances the policing and Fire & Rescue elements of its overall remit. The Panel may wish to review how it has done this in 2020/21, which is still only the second full year that it has completed as a Police, Fire & Crime panel compared to six years spent with its original remit.

Performance information sought to scrutinise the PFCC.

- 5.3 The Panel is accustomed to receiving regular reports from the PFCC on progress with the delivery of his Police & Crime Plan and Fire & Rescue Plan. The format for these reports has continued to evolve during 2020/21 with regard to the type of information that is provided to the Panel to show how the PFCC is carrying out his responsibility for holding to account the respective chief officers for operational performance. The Panel has discussed the provision of performance information with the PFCC at different times and this has, for example, resulted in the organisation of the briefing session with the Chief Constable referred in paragraph 3.2 above. Such discussion is linked to the respective remits of the Panel and the PFCC: background information about operational matters can help to contextualise issues that the Panel is scrutinising but the Panel is not responsible for scrutinising operational performance. The Panel may wish to consider its experience of this area of work in 2020/21.

### **How the Panel has done its work**

Remote meetings

- 5.4 The current Panel has gained completely new experience due to the need to hold all of its meetings and other supporting activity in 2020/21 using remote means. It is not clear whether this approach will continue in the future: the legislative provisions permitting panels to hold remote meetings are due to expire on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021 but a return to

face-to-face meetings is likely to depend on the ability to do so safely and within COVID-19 measures in operation at the time. The Panel may wish to consider whether there are any learning points about holding effective remote meetings – or effective meetings in general – that can be identified from its experience in 2020/21. The Panel might also consider whether remote working could still form part of its future activity even if this was no longer the only option for conducting business.

Use of different working methods in combination

- 5.5 The Panel’s formal meetings are the most important part of its activity but are supported by other working methods. The Panel does make use of task-and-finish working groups when appropriate to address particular issues. The Panel is also able to request briefing sessions or information through the PFCC to provide members with background knowledge intended to assist them to carry out the Panel’s role. The Panel may wish to consider how it has used the range of working methods available to it as a whole in 2020/21.

## 6. List of Appendices

**Appendix 1: Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel outline work programme 2020/21**

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Background Papers:	Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Policing & Crime Act 2017 Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Rules of Procedure

Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel – Outline Work Programme 2020/21

MEETING DATE	STATUTORY BUSINESS	DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS	BUSINESS RELATING TO PANEL OPERATION	OTHER BUSINESS
16 July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PFCC’s Annual Report on Policing for 2019/20</li> <li>- PFCC’s Fire &amp; Rescue Statement for 2019/20</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budget updates</li> <li>- Impact of COVID-19 on policing and community safety in the county</li> <li>- Northamptonshire Police Performance Update</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appointment of independent co-opted members</li> <li>- Appointment of Panel Chair and Deputy Chair</li> <li>- Appointment of Complaints Sub Committee members</li> <li>- Work programme</li> <li>- Complaints monitoring report</li> </ul>	
24 September 2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PFCC’s Delivery update</li> <li>- Budget updates</li> <li>- Accountability and assurance arrangements operated by the PFCC</li> <li>- Joint Independent Audit Committee Annual Report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work programme</li> </ul>	
10 December 2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PFCC’s Delivery updates</li> <li>- Budget updates</li> <li>- Work of Voice for Victims and Witnessess</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work programme</li> <li>- Report of the Panel Operation Working Group</li> </ul>	

MEETING DATE	STATUTORY BUSINESS	DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS	BUSINESS RELATING TO PANEL OPERATION	OTHER BUSINESS
3 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PFCC's proposed Police precept and budget for 2021/22</li> <li>- PFCC's proposed Fire &amp; Rescue precept and budget for 2021/22</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work programme</li> <li>- Complaints monitoring report</li> </ul>	
24 March 2021		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PFCC's Delivery updates</li> <li>- Budget updates</li> <li>- Continuing response to COVID-19 in the county</li> <li>- Operation of the PFCC's complaints responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Handover to the 2021/22 Panel: lessons from the current Panel's experience</li> <li>- 2020/21 meeting dates</li> <li>- Representations on future use of remote meetings</li> </ul>	

### Discretionary Business

The PFCC's Delivery Updates are regular reports setting out actions by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC) supporting progress towards the delivery of the strategic outcomes set out in the Police & Crime Plan and Fire & Rescue Plan. The Delivery Updates also include contextual information about Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service performance.

The Panel meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020 agreed to give further consideration to the performance information that is presented to it in future following the briefing session on policing demand and types of offences held ahead of the Panel meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020. In the meantime, the PFCC has continued to develop the format and content of the two Delivery Updates. The Panel meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 agreed that Panel members should have an informal discussion ahead of the current Panel meeting to assist in reaching a common view on this matter.

The Budget Updates are regular reports setting out the latest in-year position for the budgets for policing and the Office of the PFCC and the budget for the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority.

## **Task-and-finish work**

The Panel meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020 agreed as part of its work programme for 2020/21 to establish a task-and-finish working group to carry out the following tasks:

- To review the current operation of the Panel in light of the Local Government Association guidance on Policing & Fire Governance and identify any opportunities for improvement.
- To consider potential changes to the operation of the Panel that will be required to reflect local government reorganisation in Northamptonshire, with a view to helping to inform future decisions on this matter by the responsible bodies.

Councillors Gill Mercer, Richard Auger, Ian Jelley and Ken Pritchard and Mrs Anita Shields and Miss Pauline Woodhouse made up the task-and-finish working group on the future operation of the Panel. The working group reported the outcomes of its work to the Panel meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020. The Chair subsequently wrote to the leaders and chief executives of the North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire authorities to relay the Panel's conclusions regarding matters relating to its future operation.

The Panel meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 agreed to establish a working group to be engaged in the development of the PFCC's proposed precepts and budgets for 2021/22, reflecting an invitation received from the PFCC. Councillors Gill Mercer, Andre Gonzalez De Savage and Kevin Parker and Mrs Anita Shields made up this working group, which met on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

## **Other potential work programme matters**

The Panel has previously identified the following matters as potential topics for inclusion in its future work programme:

- The more detailed plans designed to deliver the PFCC's Estates Strategy (last considered at the Panel meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020).
- An update on the work of Voice for Victims and Witnesses (last considered at the Panel meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020).

## **Briefings / Training**

The Panel meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 agreed that its future work programme should include annual briefing sessions with the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police and the Chief Fire Officer of Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Services to give an overview of their services areas and key issues involved. Such briefing sessions could follow a similar broad approach to the session with the Chief Constable held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 referred to above.

The Panel has identified the following topics for future briefings:

- Emergency services IT systems, including the Pronto digital policing system.
- A briefing or visit to the new Wellingborough prison

The Panel has also identified the need for appropriate briefings / training at the start of 2021/22 for the new membership of the Panel.

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL**

**24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**

**REPORT BY THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES ASSISTANT MANAGER  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**James Edmunds**

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Proposed Police, Fire &amp; Crime Panel Meeting Dates for 2021/22</b>
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>That the Northamptonshire Police, Fire &amp; Crime Panel agrees the proposed meeting dates for 2021/22 set out in the report.</b>

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 The report is intended to set out proposed meeting dates for the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel for the 2021/22 civic year.

**2. Proposed Dates**

2.1 The following dates for Panel meetings in 2021/22 are proposed:

- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021
- Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021
- Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021
- Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022
- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (Reserve)
- Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2022

All meetings to start at 1.00pm

2.2 These proposed meeting dates aim broadly to reflect the established scheduling of Panel meetings. They take into account the following considerations:

- At its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 the Panel discussed the need to meet relatively promptly at the start of 2021/22, to maintain continuity and to enable it to engage with the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner who takes office on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The date for the meeting in June 2021 is intended to reflect this, whilst also recognising that local authorities will need to use their annual general meetings in late-May to appoint councillor members to the Panel.
- The dates for the meetings in February 2022 reflect the statutory requirements on the Panel concerning scrutiny of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's proposed Police and Fire & Rescue precepts: the Panel must scrutinise and make a report on the proposed precepts by 8<sup>th</sup> February and, if necessary following a veto of the proposed precepts, scrutinise and make a report on revised precepts by 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

2.3 The Panel should recognise that these proposed meeting dates have been identified in a more uncertain context than would normally be the case, connected both with the reorganisation of local government in Northamptonshire and with particular implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following points are highlighted in this regard:

- The proposed meeting schedule for the Panel would normally take account of local authority meetings in Northamptonshire with a view to avoiding any significant clashes. It is not possible to do this to the same extent in this case as the 2021/22 meeting schedules for the new North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire councils are still being developed. Information about potential meeting dates that is available has been taken into consideration.
- It is not yet known whether Panel meetings in 2021/22 will take place as face-to-face meetings, remote meetings or a combination of the two approaches. The legislative provisions permitting panels to hold remote meetings are due to expire on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021. However, a return to face-to-face meetings is also likely to depend on the ability to do so safely and within COVID-19 measures in operation at the time.
- It is not necessary when identifying proposed dates for remote meetings to take into account the availability of suitable venues. This will become a factor in relation to the Panel when it is possible to hold face-to-face meetings again. At this point there may also be a question of where Panel meetings are held in the context of the new local government structure in Northamptonshire.

2.4 The Panel should consider and agree the proposed meeting dates as a basis on which to proceed at this point and, particularly, to set a date for the first Panel meeting in 2021/22. The meeting schedule can be reviewed at this first meeting as necessary, to take account of any developments in the areas identified in paragraph 2.3 above. The Panel will then be able to maintain an overview of the meeting schedule as it moves through the subsequent year and respond to any issues that arise that may require it to consider amending planned meeting dates.

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL**

**24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**

**REPORT BY THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES ASSISTANT MANAGER  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**James Edmunds**

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Future use of remote meetings by Police, Fire &amp; Crime panels</b>
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>That the Northamptonshire Police, Fire &amp; Crime Panel agrees that the Chair should write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities &amp; Local Government encouraging an extension of the current provisions permitting Police (Fire) &amp; Crime panels to hold remote meetings.</b>

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The report invites the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel to agree to make representations to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government supporting an extension of the current legal provisions permitting Police (Fire) & Crime panels to hold remote meetings.

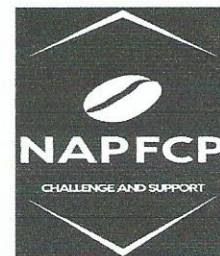
**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Coronavirus Act 2020 and supporting regulations have permitted local authority committees and Police (Fire) & Crime panels to hold meetings by remote means since 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020 to enable business to be conducted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The provisions permitting remote meetings are currently due to expire on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- 2.2 Various relevant organisations – including the Local Government Association, the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny, Lawyers in Local Government and the Association of Democratic Services Officers – have made a case for the government to extend the ability to hold remote meetings beyond the current cut-off point, given the benefits that would result from having this flexibility. The Chair of the National Association of Police, Fire & Crime Panels has recently written to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government on this matter. A copy of the letter is included with this report (at Appendix 1).
- 2.3 The Chair of the Northamptonshire, Police, Fire & Crime Panel proposes that the Panel should contribute its representations to the case being made to the government, using the letter from the National Association as a model.

### 3. List of Appendices

**Appendix 1: Letter from the Chair of the National Association of Police, Fire & Crime Panels to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government**

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Background Papers:	Coronavirus Act 2020 Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020



Robert Jenrick - Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

23rd February 2021

cc. Kit Malthouse - Minister for Policing

Dear Mr Jenrick,

May I request your support to extend the important provisions set out in the Coronavirus Act 2020, that allow Police (Fire) and Crime Panels (PCP or PFCP) to lawfully hold meetings by remote means. The conditions of the Act expire on 7 May 2021 and without suitable amendment, Panels will be unable to lawfully conduct business remotely, resulting in a return to face-to-face meetings where panel members must be physically present in the room to be recognised for quorate purposes or to vote on an agenda item.

The pandemic has demonstrated that Panels have been able to conduct business positively and cost effectively through remote means. Remote working provides the public with benefits of easier and more convenient access to meetings and therefore more effective opportunities to engage with Panels. Remote and hybrid meetings can provide very positive benefits for Panel members, a Commissioner, their support staff and most importantly the public represented.

We are all aware of the importance of stemming the tide of Covid-19 infections and I suggest it would be ill-advised to revert to in-person meetings in early May if this can be avoided and particularly if any aspect of social distancing is to be maintained. It is not unusual for Panel members, the Commissioner and their staff to have to travel for more than an hour each way to physically attend Panel meetings which is often the case in diverse rural counties. Remote and hybrid working provide the opportunity for greater working efficiency and as a significant by-product, helps to reduce the overall carbon footprint through reduced travel.

I would be grateful for your support to firstly allow Panel meetings to be held remotely after the 7 May and to allow hybrid meetings to lawfully take place giving Panels the flexibility to choose how it conducts its business efficiently and effectively by remote, hybrid or face-to-face working whilst meeting the needs of the county.

Yours sincerely,

John Gili-Ross  
Chairman - National Association of Police, Fire & Crime Panels

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