

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

REPORT TO THE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

7 JANUARY 2022

Report Title	Review of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan 2021-26
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to set out the results of the review by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan 2021-26.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire is required to produce a Police & Crime Plan and a Fire & Rescue Plan setting out his priorities and objectives for these areas of responsibility. The two plans may be combined into a single Police, Fire & Crime Plan. The draft of this Plan must be reviewed by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel, resulting in the production of a report to the Commissioner.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire:
- Has regard to this report by the Police, Fire & Crime Panel arising from its review of his draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan 2021-26 carried out in accordance with the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 28(3).
 - Provides the Panel with a response to this report and its recommendations set out in section 6 in accordance with the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 5 Paragraph 6(e).

- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation(s) – The recommendations are required to complete the Panel’s review of the draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan 2021-26 published by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner, in accordance with the Panel’s statutory responsibilities.

4. Report Background

Police & Crime Plan

- 4.1 The Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 sections 5 and 7 state that a Police & Crime commissioner must issue a Police & Crime Plan setting out the following matters:
- a) the Police & Crime commissioner’s objectives for the policing of the police area; for crime and disorder reduction in that area; and for the discharge by the police force of its national or international functions
 - b) the policing of the police area which the chief officer of police is to provide
 - c) the financial and other resources which the commissioner is to provide to the chief officer of police for the chief officer to exercise their functions
 - d) the means by which the chief officer of police will report to the commissioner on the chief officer's provision of policing
 - e) the means by which the chief officer of police's performance in providing policing will be measured
 - f) services to be provided or commissioned by the commissioner to contribute to crime and disorder reduction in the police area and to support victims and witnesses of criminal offences and anti-social behaviour
 - g) any grants which the commissioner is to make in relation to crime and disorder reduction and support for victims and witnesses and the conditions applying to any such grants.
- 4.2 A Police & Crime commissioner must issue a Police & Crime Plan within the financial year in which an ordinary election is held, doing so as soon as practicable after taking office. A commissioner may also issue a new Police & Crime Plan or a variation of an existing Plan at any other time.
- 4.3 Before a Police & Crime commissioner issues a Police & Crime Plan, or a Plan variation, the commissioner must send the draft Plan to the relevant Police & Crime panel. The 2011 Act section 28 requires the panel to review the draft Plan and to make a report or recommendations on it to the commissioner. The report or recommendations by the panel must also be published.
- 4.4 The Police & Crime commissioner must have regard to any report or recommendations made by the panel on a draft Plan, respond to the panel and publish that response. The commissioner may then issue the Plan.

Fire & Rescue Plan

- 4.5 The Policing & Crime Act 2017 schedule 1 and the Fire & Rescue National Framework for England state that a Police, Fire & Crime commissioner must issue a Fire & Rescue Plan setting out the commissioner’s strategic vision, priorities and objectives for their Fire & Rescue service in

connection with the discharge of the commissioner's functions as the Fire & Rescue authority. The National Framework sets the following priorities for all Fire & Rescue authorities:

- to make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents
- to identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face
- to collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide
- to be accountable to communities for the service they provide
- to develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

4.6 The government expects a Police, Fire & Crime commissioner to issue a Fire & Rescue Plan 'shortly after' the commissioner takes office. A commissioner may also revise an existing Plan at any other time. A combined Fire & Rescue and Police & Crime Plan may be produced: in this case the combined Plan must set out both policing and Fire & Rescue priorities and objectives.

4.7 A draft Fire & Rescue Plan, or draft Plan variation, is subject to the same scrutiny process detailed in paragraphs 4.3-4.4 of this report.

5. Review of the Draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan

5.1 The Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel met in public on 16th December 2021 to review the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan for 2021-26. The webcast of the meeting is available to view at: [Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel - YouTube](#).

5.2 In presenting the draft Plan the Commissioner emphasised that it was the first combined Police, Fire & Crime Plan for Northamptonshire but also in the country as a whole. The Plan set out his strategic priorities, not an exhaustive list of future actions. These strategic priorities sought to protect and build on previous work and to give a renewed focus to the core objective of making Northamptonshire a safer place. The Plan identified key priorities for Northamptonshire Police, for Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS), for joint working between the two services and for work with other partners. This reflected the Commissioner's experience that some of the issues affecting safety in the county could not be solved by a single organisation. The Commissioner was confident in the level of consultation carried out on the Plan and that the feedback obtained supported his proposed priorities. The new Plan would support continuing improvement in local services by challenging the force and NFRS to raise the bar still further. Previous investment had put the force on course to have more than 1,500 officers by 2023, the highest number ever, and had stabilised NFRS. The new Plan would help to use resources more effectively to meet the challenges of the future. The Commissioner was confident that with effective working between organisations Northamptonshire would be made a safer place.

5.3 The Panel then questioned the Commissioner on aspects of the development of the draft Plan and the strategic priorities that it identified.

Public support for Plan priorities

- 5.4 A Panel member noted that the 1,103 people who responded to the consultation survey on the draft Plan represented approximately 0.2% of the population of Northamptonshire aged 20 years and over. The Commissioner was questioned about the adequacy of this sample size and how it could be increased in future. It was highlighted in this context that the PEEL 2021/22 inspection report on Northamptonshire Police had concluded that the force needed to improve its own community engagement. Members also noted that the demographic breakdown of survey responses raised concerns about the level of engagement with people living in 'left behind' neighbourhoods in areas such as Corby and with people from black and minority ethnic community groups. The Commissioner responded that there was not a simple answer to improving public engagement. His Office continued to look for new ways to do so and reviewed past consultation exercises to identify opportunities to improve. However, the Commissioner went on to emphasise that the priorities in the draft Plan reflected commitments he had made when standing for election in 2021. These had had been supported by over 102,000 voters in addition to the responses to the latest consultation exercise.

Plan Priority – Prevention that keeps the county safe

- 5.5 Panel members emphasised the increasing risk of cyber-related crime and fraud. This could be a hidden issue, which some victims were reluctant to report. There was scope to provide more information and support to people who were potentially vulnerable, such as older people living alone or people who were not confident using technology. The Commissioner was challenged as to whether cyber-related fraud should be more prominent in his new priorities. The Commissioner highlighted that the Plan did make specific reference to fraud rather than just general cyber-related crime. This continued to be an area of attention in Northamptonshire both in terms of enforcement and crime prevention. More general activity such as work to improve the force's digital capability would assist in this. Prospective changes to the law in 2022 requiring banks to reimburse people who have been victims of scams were also likely to increase the national focus on cyber-related fraud still further.

Plan Priority – Protect and support those who are vulnerable

- 5.6 A Panel member emphasised that there was an increasingly blurred line between being a victim and a perpetrator of crime, particularly in relation to young people: a young person who had suffered from crime was at greater risk of becoming a perpetrator. Robust enforcement action by Northamptonshire Police on an issue such as knife crime should be done in way that would encourage members of the public to speak to the force. Generally, police officers should treat people in the way that they would want to be treated themselves. The Commissioner agreed with this principle and emphasised that it was part of the priority to strengthen neighbourhood policing in the county. Neighbourhood policing aimed to work together with local communities. Linking youth teams with neighbourhood policing teams would also assist in this. This approach would help to support more locally-led, collaborative action on issues such as knife crime. Even with 1,500 officers, the force could not make Northamptonshire a safer place without support and input from the community.

- 5.7 A Panel member emphasised that young people not in education, employment or training represented a particularly vulnerable group in society. It was important that all relevant organisations, including the police, played a part in supporting their wellbeing. The Commissioner was questioned as to how his priorities would contribute to meeting this need. The Panel was reminded that local authorities held the primary responsibility for safeguarding children. However, the Commissioner's Office made various contributions to partnership working on this matter: the Adverse Childhood Experiences team worked with schools to provide support to young people, whilst Youth Services carried out community-based work that could help to identify and support young people who were not in school. The force also carried out a range of activity that would contribute directly or indirectly to the wellbeing of these young people. This was a complex issue as there could be many reasons for young people not being in education, employment or training. The Commissioner remained committed to participating in the collective response in Northamptonshire.
- 5.8 Panel members highlighted the benefits that could result from young people having work experience or employment opportunities with the emergency services, not only to the individuals concerned but in strengthening the relationship between those organisations and the wider community that they served. It was questioned how far this occurred in Northamptonshire. The Commissioner advised that the age profile of Northamptonshire Police recruits tended to be slanted towards younger ages. The force currently had a significant proportion of young recruits and it could be counterproductive to go further in this direction: the attrition rate for younger recruits could be higher than for those coming into the police with more life experience. The force should also try to reflect the community in terms of including people at different ages as well as in other ways. The Commissioner went on to highlight the role of the Emergency Services Cadets in helping to build links with the local community. Members recognised examples of good work being done in Northamptonshire but emphasised the need to communicate effectively about available opportunities: a young person not in education, employment or training, for example, needed to be engaged quickly with a view to understanding their interests.

Plan Priority – Modern services that are fit for the future

- 5.9 A Panel member noted that the focus on prevention, partnership working and community engagement reflected in the draft Plan would have resource implications and sought reassurance about how these would be met. The Commissioner advised that he had been able to increase the resources available to support community safety in Northamptonshire, from both local and national sources. As an example, the budget for policing had risen from approximately £110m when he was elected in 2016 to approximately £150m in 2021. He would be able to raise the police precept by up to £10 for 2022/23; the Home Office was also in the process of reviewing the police funding formula. However, the Plan did not reflect an approach based solely on securing more money for Northamptonshire. It was essential that the force and NFRS worked as effectively as possible to make best use of available resources.
- 5.10 A Panel member questioned how the Commissioner was supporting the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer to enable their organisations to become more representative of the communities they served in Northamptonshire. The Commissioner advised that he did hold the

two chiefs to account robustly on matters relating to recruitment, supported by better information that was now available to his Office. He was satisfied that the force and NFRS were making genuine progress with regards to reflecting the communities that they served. Female officers made up 80% of Northamptonshire Police's latest intake of detectives and 40% of the total number of officers recruited by the force in the current year: one of the highest percentages in the country.

Presentation and circulation of the Plan

- 5.11 A Panel member commented that the 'Plan on a Page' graphic included in previous plans was helpful and encouraged that this approach be used again. The Commissioner advised that the format of the current Plan reflected that it included linked priorities for both the force and NFRS, which needed to be set out clearly. In response to further questions the Commissioner confirmed that once the final Plan had been approved it would be made available to members of the public on his website, including in accessible formats.

Overall conclusions

- 5.12 Panel members commented during discussion that the Commissioner's proposed Plan should be welcomed. The Plan would support a fresh approach that recognised the importance of partnership working and prevention activity in securing a safer community. If local communities were engaged appropriately they should be able to support activities intended to deliver the strategic priorities set out in the Plan.

6. Outcomes of the Review

- 6.1 At the conclusion of discussion the Panel resolved:
- a) **To endorse the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan 2021-26, and**
 - b) **To welcome the focus on prevention and partnership working reflected in the draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan 2021-26.**

7. Background Papers

Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011

Policing & Crime Act 2017

Fire & Rescue National Framework for England

Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Terms of Reference.

Policing and fire governance – Local Government Association guidance for police and crime panels (2019)