

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

31ST JULY 2019

Subject:	Review of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Annual Report for 2018/19
Recommendations:	That the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Considers this report by the Police, Fire & Crime Panel arising from its review of his Annual Report carried out in accordance with the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 28(4).b) Provides the Panel with a response to this report and its recommendations set out in section 4 in accordance with the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 12 Paragraph 4(a).

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 Annual Report for 2018/19.

2. Background

- 2.1 Sections 12 and 28 of the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 specify that a Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) must produce an annual report. The annual report must report on:
- a) the exercise of the PCC's functions in the previous financial year, and
 - b) the progress which has been made in the financial year in meeting the police and crime objectives in the police and crime plan.
- 2.2 The annual report must be sent to the relevant Police & Crime Panel as soon as practicable following its publication by the PCC.
- 2.3 The Police & Crime Panel must arrange a public meeting of the Panel to be held as soon as practicable after the Panel receives the annual report.
- 2.4 The PCC must attend the Panel meeting to present the report and to answer such questions from the Panel about the report as Panel members think appropriate.
- 2.5 The Panel must review the annual report and produce a report outlining any recommendations to the PCC. The report or recommendations of the Panel must also

be published. The PCC must provide a response to the Panel and must also publish that response.

3. Review of the Annual Report

- 3.1 The Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel met in public on 17th July 2019 to review the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Annual Report for 2018/19.
- 3.2 In presenting the Annual Report the Commissioner highlighted that his third year in office had seen significant changes and achievements. He had taken on responsibility for the governance of Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service whilst also taking positive action on matters such as protecting vulnerable people, improving road safety and addressing rural crime. The level of government funding for policing in Northamptonshire remained a concern but the Commissioner hoped that continuing representations about the need for a fairer approach would have an effect. The Commissioner went on to thank his Office for their work during the year and praised the commitment and dedication shown by Northamptonshire Police officers and staff.
- 3.3 The Panel then questioned the Commissioner about his work in 2018/19 and how this contributed to meeting his overall aims. The Panel considered the following matters:

Increasing accessibility to and visibility of policing in both urban and rural areas

- 3.4 A Panel member noted the effect of decisions taken at national level on community safety in Northamptonshire and encouraged the Commissioner to consider how the Panel might support him in representing Northamptonshire's interests to the government. At the same time, the member emphasised that effective policing should be based on doing the basics well. The Annual Report was encouraging about the ability to get to this position. However, further clarity was sought about specific improvements made by Northamptonshire Police that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services saw as the building blocks for more effective policing. The Commissioner responded that the force was still not where he wished it to be, although in a better position than at any other recent time. It had many good officers: the challenge that needed to be addressed was to put them in a position where they could do their jobs as effectively as possible and deliver a service that met public expectations.
- 3.5 The Panel discussed different issues that could contribute to public perceptions of policing and community safety in the county. A member felt that there was a lack of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in central Northampton, particularly given the area-based scheme introduced by the Commissioner. The Panel was advised that the scheme of dedicated PCSOs was largely focussed on rural areas, where a parish council could provide sponsorship. The Commissioner also emphasised that sponsored PCSOs represented an addition to the core complement funded by the force. There were fewer resources available to fund PCSOs than in the past due to factors including the reduction of previous local authority funding. The Commissioner noted that he had provided additional resources for the force for frontline policing: if funding became available in future then consideration could be given to bolstering the number of PCSOs. It was important to understand residents' perceptions of the services being

provided in the county. However, the deployment of PCSOs was an operational matter, which reflected the aim of embedding them in the force's overall activities. A member subsequently suggested that the Annual Report should give more prominence to neighbourhood policing as this was an approach that was widely understood by members of the public.

Intervening at the earliest opportunity to divert young people from being the victims or offenders of the future

- 3.6 The Panel was informed that £627,000 funding from the Home Office's Serious Youth Violence Early Intervention Fund secured by the Commissioner and the force had been used to support a pioneering project aimed at preventing young people from becoming involved in violence and gang-related activity. This was a growing issue in the county, which the Commissioner considered was also not reflected in overall government funding: major urban areas tended to be prioritised but crime levels in Northamptonshire were affected by people coming out of urban areas. The Commissioner worked hard with relevant partners to secure government funding opportunities such as this, recognising that community safety was not solely a police function. A member questioned what would happen to the project once the Home Office funding was used and emphasised the need to avoid taking a piecemeal approach. The Commissioner advised that in this case the external funding had augmented work that was already planned. The effectiveness of the project would be reviewed and if it was successful it could be incorporated into business as usual in future.

Demonstrating progress towards Police & Crime Plan objectives

- 3.7 Panel members commended the presentation of the Annual Report and the breadth of activity it outlined. However, a member emphasised that the Commissioner was at the point in his term of office when it was reasonable for the Panel to expect that the Annual Report would say more about specific progress towards his priorities. The latest national guidance for Police & Crime Panels advised that scrutiny of the Annual Report should focus on understanding and testing whether objectives set out in the Commissioner's Police & Crime Plan had been met. A lack of clarity about the outcomes sought by the Commissioner could also lead to activity becoming unfocussed. In response, the Commissioner expressed confidence that the updated Police & Crime Plan he had presented to the Panel meeting on 4th April 2019 identified clear outcomes and that further performance reporting would give the Panel clarity about the progress being made towards them.

Increasing the awareness of, and confidence to report, crime amongst the most vulnerable people in our society

- 3.8 The Panel considered action being taken in the county to address domestic abuse and members emphasised the need for an effective, cohesive approach between all of the organisations concerned. The Commissioner responded that domestic abuse was a major focus for work by the community safety partnerships in Northamptonshire supported by his Office. He and his Office had also pursued issues such as the importance of early intervention and the use of conditional cautions in discussions with central government about domestic abuse. An integrated approach was needed to prevent the factors that could contribute to domestic abuse and to address it effectively

when it occurred. This reflected that there was not a single home for domestic abuse within central government, or a statutory lead agency at local level, but that the response to it involved many contributory functions such as social care, policing and housing.

- 3.9 A Panel member questioned whether there were more effective joined-up approaches to domestic abuse in other force areas than in Northamptonshire. The Panel was advised that a new domestic abuse strategy for the county was currently being developed, with the support of relevant partners. Northamptonshire was also one of 7 areas in the country that had got a dispensation from the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) to use conditional cautioning in domestic abuse cases. Conditional cautioning allowed a more educational and behaviour-changing approach to be taken with offenders. The Commissioner emphasised that securing the DPP's agreement to apply this approach represented a significant achievement and was an example of what he and his Office could do to provide leadership in relation to responding to domestic abuse, whilst not having sole responsibility for it. The reoffending rate in Northamptonshire compared favourably with that in other force areas. Dealing with domestic abuse represented a priority for him as the Commissioner and he was seeking to do this in a joined-up way. He noted that the Annual Report presented to the Panel focussed on his statutory role and activities. It would be complemented in future by an annual report by the Chief Constable focussing on the force's work.

4. Outcomes of the Review

- 4.1 At the conclusion of discussion the Panel agreed the following resolutions:

- (a) That the Panel recommends that the Annual Report should have a more outcome-based approach to demonstrate progress towards the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's key priorities.**
- (b) That the Panel recommends that the Annual Report should give more prominence to the issue of domestic abuse in Northamptonshire.**

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