



Cllr Gill Mercer  
c/o Mr James Edmunds  
Democratic Services Assistant Manager  
Northamptonshire County Council  
One Angel Square  
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30<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Gill,

Following the publication of your response to my Annual Report, I am pleased to respond to the Panel in accordance with Section 28 (4) of Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

I am grateful that the panel considered that the report was well written and informative and I have always been open and transparent in providing information regarding the work of my office and force performance data, something I will continue to do in line with my statutory duties as set in the Policing Protocol and the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

I do think, however it is important that the panel should remain cognisant of its statutory roles and responsibilities in holding me to account as the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire. As you will know the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (c. 13) Part 1 Chapter 3 sets out the responsibility for each PCC to produce a report on the exercise of their functions in each financial year and the progress which has been made in meeting the police and crime objectives as set out in the Police and Crime Plan.

The decision to include force performance and demand data is to illustrate the challenges and complexities of policing a large county such as Northamptonshire and how that helps to shape and direct the work of my office as we deliver my Police and Crime Plan. For example, tackling child abuse and exploitation is one of our priorities and drove my decision to invest in Early Intervention and the new Youth Team.

In your response to the Annual Report, you noted that robbery and burglary were different types of crime and I explained the complexities of how crime is recorded by the force. This is why I am more than happy to arrange a briefing session for the Panel to give them a better understanding of how crime is recorded by the Force and how we are performing in relation to those in our Most Similar Group (MSG). This will also give Panel Members an insight to how

the force are meeting the strategic priorities that I have set out in my Police and Crime Plan and subsequently those set by the Chief Constable in his Policing Plan.

As you know, the primary role of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel is to provide checks and balances in relation to the performance of the PFCC. The Panel does not scrutinise the Chief Constable – it scrutinises the PFCC's exercise of their statutory functions. Operational Policing is the responsibility of the Chief Constable and as the PFCC I must not fetter the operational independence of the police force and the Chief Constable who leads it.

Whilst I am happy to provide data in relation to the performance of the Force, it is not the role of the panel to scrutinise the performance of the Chief Constable and his officers. In the meeting I did challenge the notion that there was not enough of an assurance that I was holding the Chief Constable sufficiently to account regarding the force's performance.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 specifies that Police and Crime Plans must contain the means by which the chief officer of police's performance in providing policing will be measured. In my plan, I set out how I formally hold the Chief Constable to account through a monthly Accountability Board and I will provide regular updates to the panel.

This enables me to exercise my 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. 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. Following each meeting, the minutes of the meeting are publically available on my website to ensure transparency of this formal process.

This work was reflected in the Annual Report on page 25 under the heading of HMICFRS in the following section:

*"I am more confident than I have ever been that the Force is improving, putting the focus on the areas that matter to people such as answering calls more quickly, timely and thorough investigation, targeting burglary and using technology to make sure police are in the right place at the right time. These are changes that I can see and I hope will make a real difference to residents in communities across the county. I am well aware that there is still much to do. I have ensured that the Chief has the resources he needs, with a bigger budget than ever before."*

To ensure that the pace of improvement continues I receive regular updates from the Chief Constable as part of our accountability process.

I will of course consider what further information I can provide to the panel to ensure they are more aware of the work we undertake to ensure the Chief Constable is held to account for the performance of the force and I would encourage all members of the Panel to read the minutes of the Accountability Boards which can be found on my website at:

<https://www.northantspfcc.org.uk/police-fire-accountability-boards/>

I will also ensure that information regarding the effectiveness of community safety work is also featured in future annual reports to highlight the benefits of this work on communities across our county. This will also provide the opportunity to also highlight areas of concern where key partners are not fulfilling their duties in this important area of work. I have already expressed my frustrations in relation to the funding of services to tackling domestic abuse and the provision of refuges and I will continue to raise concerns throughout the year and in future annual reports.

As the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner I undertake regular meetings with key stakeholders, community groups and members of the public. As you will know I have also undertaken a number of visits with panel members to see at first hand the problems and concerns facing their wards to ensure that these are then fed back to the force. I am not convinced a 'café-style' remote meeting with relevant stakeholders to take their views about community safety priorities and performance will be beneficial to the positive and constructive working relationship we have established. Panel meetings are open to the public and are broadcast live on the internet.

As I have already noted, the role of the Panel is to provide checks and balances in relation to the performance of the PCC and I believe holding joint meetings would undermine your principal statutory duty and may sow the seeds of confusion with our partners in relation to our roles. There is clearly nothing to prevent the panel from undertaking consultation with local groups and stakeholders, but maintaining a clear and pragmatic working relationship is, for me is paramount.

Over the last twelve months I am proud of the work that we have delivered and the improvements that have been made to policing in Northamptonshire. As PFCC I am responsible for ensuring that we maintain an efficient and effective police force. The annual report set out that we have been able to provide extra funding to the force which has been translated into an increase into the number of officers which means the force now has more operational officers since 2010. Thanks to my investment, the force is also on a trajectory to have more officers than it has ever had in its history.

In addition to this, we been able to deliver investment in essential equipment and resources to support investigation teams as well as delivering:

- Investment in the Early Intervention Team
- Investment in the Youth Work Team
- A new strategy to tackle crime in rural areas
- A countrywide group to focus on road safety in Northamptonshire

All of this is helping me to deliver the priorities I set out in my Police and Crime Plan and it also helps the Chief Constable deliver his Policing Plan both of which are subjected to regular review and scrutiny though the accountability board and I will keep the panel updated on our work throughout the year.

Finally I would thank members of Northamptonshire's Police, Fire and Crime Panel who have been supportive and understanding of the work we have been undertaken over the last year.

I am under no illusions that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic will provide us all with challenges over the coming year. I have nothing but admiration for the dedication and commitment shown by our police officers to keep us all safe and protected during these unprecedented times.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Stephen Mold". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Stephen Mold  
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire