

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

5TH AUGUST 2020

Subject:	Review of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Annual Report for 2019/20
Recommendations:	That the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner: 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 2019/20.

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 16th July 2020 to review the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Annual Report for 2019/20.
- 3.2 The Commissioner highlighted his pride in the achievements set out in the Annual Report, which was the fourth he had presented. He had been able to provide additional resources for Northamptonshire Police, which now had its highest level of funding since 2010. The force had more police officers than ever before whilst Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) had also made good progress with recruitment in the past year. The Commissioner had invested in action to address priority areas such as rural crime and road safety. At the same time, investment in creating Early Intervention and Youth teams reflected the importance of prevention activity to prevent crime and support community safety. The Commissioner thanked his Office, the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer and the force and NFRS personnel for their work during the past year.
- 3.3 The Panel then questioned the Commissioner about the position presented in the Annual Report, in the context of the focus areas identified in the Commissioner's Police & Crime Plan. The Panel considered the following matters:

Enforcing robustly to fight crime and protect people

- 3.4 A Panel member noted that the Annual Report set out the Commissioner's focus area of reducing burglaries and positive progress made so far. However, other performance data that the Commissioner had provided to the Panel identified that Northamptonshire Police was currently ranked 22nd of the 43 police forces in the country for residential burglary. The Annual Report also stated that robbery offences had increased by 21% in the past year. The Commissioner was challenged on the amount of progress that had actually been made on this focus area and whether this reflected the resources he had invested. The Commissioner responded that the number of residential burglaries in Northamptonshire had been reduced by 30%, which was a commendable achievement by the force. The Panel was advised that robbery and burglary were different types of crime. It was further clarified that individual offences could represent more than one type of crime: for example, a serious acquisitive crime offence occurring in a rural area would be counted in data for both types of crime.
- 3.5 A Panel member considered that the report was well written and informative, with helpful use of embedded links. However, concern was raised about the substance of the report with regard to policing demand in Northamptonshire. The position regarding crime involving property was improving. However, the Annual Report seemed to show concerning increases in various types of crimes against the person, including robbery, domestic abuse, sexual offences and knife crime. The Commissioner was asked to confirm if this was the case and questioned about the causes for such a position and what action was being taken to address it.

- 3.6 The Commissioner emphasised that the full context for the performance data set out in the Annual Report needed to be recognised. Rape and sexual violence was an example of a key area that was not solely within the power of the force to influence. The level of historic offences was also significant: historic offences made up 40% of the total number in Northamptonshire over the past 12 months and had made up 72% of the total in June. The deployment of more police officers in an area such as drug crime meant that more offenders were being caught. At the same time the COVID-19 pandemic had contributed to a significant backlog in the courts, which had an effect on policing demand and on the force's use of resources. The Commissioner had raised this issue with the Secretary of State and with the Solicitor General, although would welcome others' support in doing so. The overall situation regarding policing demand was not linear. Northamptonshire was becoming a safer place but there were particular elements within the overall picture that still needed to be addressed. Victim satisfaction continued to increase. A crucial consideration was also the force's performance relative to its Most Similar Group (MSG). The Commissioner was confident that the force was improving relative to its MSG, although needed to continue this progress. He could provide further contextualised information or a briefing session to inform the Panel on this matter if requested.
- 3.7 A Panel member noted that there seemed to be a negative trend overall and that this did not give confidence for the future. The Commissioner responded that he did not expect a reduction in the figures for policing demand presented in the Annual Report. This reflected that he wanted Northamptonshire residents to be confident to come forward to report crime and confident that it would be investigated effectively. Members subsequently highlighted that it was important not just to assume that an increase in crime reflected better reporting and a decrease reflected better policing. Concern was also raised that Northamptonshire remained a significant outlier for knife crime. The Commissioner emphasised that he was holding to account the Chief Constable for the force's performance in this regard, which was his statutory role. The Commissioner had provided £100,000 additional investment in the past year towards preventing knife crime and the force was seeking to take a robust approach. However, knife crime was another example of an issue that went beyond just policing. Current performance in this area again needed to be seen in the overall context: the number of offences involving a knife in the county had increased but the rate of gun crime was significantly below the national average.
- 3.8 A Panel member gave the view that the data presented in the Annual Report and the further explanation of it given at the meeting did not provide enough of an assurance that the Commissioner was holding to account the Chief Constable sufficiently regarding the force's performance. This concern might be answered by the provision to the Panel of additional contextualised information on policing demand but this information was not available at the current meeting. The Commissioner challenged this conclusion. He would give further consideration to the presentation of performance data in the Annual Report to reflect that the Commissioner was a strategic authority and that the Panel's role was to scrutinise and support him. However, he emphasised that there was a sound basis for conclusions set out in the Annual Report about progress on his focus areas. The force was not where it needed to be but he was assured that it was on the right trajectory. This should be demonstrated by forthcoming findings from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.

- 3.9 Panel members acknowledged that community safety in Northamptonshire was influenced by the effectiveness of work by other relevant bodies, such as Community Safety Partnerships, as well as that of the force. However, they emphasised the importance of demonstrating clearly to members of the public that the force was efficient and effective and that activity in the county was producing a benefit. The Commissioner was urged to consider how this could best be shown in the Annual Report, including by providing additional information on how areas of increased demand were being addressed. The Panel welcomed the offer of a specific briefing session for its members to provide further context of data on policing demand and different types of crime referred to in the Annual Report.

Improving and updating technology systems and applications to increase efficiencies

- 3.10 A Panel member noted investment in training additional police officers as drone pilots referred to in the Annual Report and hoped that this would also produce a benefit for NFRS. The Commissioner advised that NFRS currently provided the drone capability for both services. The action taken in 2019/20 enhanced existing resources and was also a pilot scheme that could point towards a time when all police officers would be trained to use drones.

Enhancing engagement and participation

- 3.11 A Panel member welcomed the appointment of Ms Gilly Anglin-Jarrett as the co-chair of the Northamptonshire Stop and Search Working Group. The Commissioner noted that this working group linked in to his own role of holding the Chief Constable to account for the force's performance. In carrying out its role the force should act proportionately and be informed by the lessons of experience from policing around the world. The force was making good progress and had also been commended for its use of stop and search powers. This progress needed to continue.
- 3.12 A Panel member questioned whether the Commissioner would see a benefit in working with the Panel to hold a 'café-style' remote meeting with relevant stakeholders to take their views about community safety priorities and performance. The Commissioner advised that in normal circumstances he operated a programme of regular public engagement meetings, which reflected and supported his statutory responsibilities. Panel members could be invited to attend some of these meetings when COVID-19 measures permitted them to resume.

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

- 3.13 A Panel member questioned how the work of the Early Intervention & Adverse Childhood Experiences (EI & ACES) team and Youth team would be co-ordinated effectively with that of the new Northamptonshire Children's Trust. The Commissioner responded that he had met with representatives of the Children's Trust to support a focus on achieving outcomes rather than organisational boundaries. The Panel was advised that existing activity was already based on joint working with Northamptonshire County Council children's services. The EI & ACES team received referrals from the Council. The Youth team specifically focussed on outreach and diversion work in order

to complement other activity. The Commissioner’s Office was clear about how to target its investment in these areas to co-ordinate with and not duplicate other activity in order to make best use of resources. Panel members were reassured that work was being co-ordinated between relevant organisations.

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service capacity

3.14 A Panel member noted that NFRS had the second lowest precept and core spending power of any Fire & Rescue service in the country and questioned what action the Commissioner was taking to address this situation. The Commissioner gave the view that NFRS provided outstanding value for money to the public in the county. It had previously been identified that the minimum number of fire appliances that needed to be available in Northamptonshire was 14; the ideal number was 18 appliances or more. When he had taken responsibility for the governance of NFRS the average availability was 16 appliances. In mid-May 2019 availability was below 14 appliances almost 30% of the time and at the ideal number only 24% of the time. This situation had since been addressed and there were currently no calls where availability was below 14 appliances. This had been achieved with minimal additional resources. Further improvements were also being delivered: NFRS had recently recruited the largest group of firefighters to come into the service since 1987; additional appliances were on order; and NFRS was increasing its high-rise capability in the context of the Grenfell Tower inquiry. The Commissioner considered that the significant improvements in appliance availability that had been achieved and other actions meant that the community in Northamptonshire was now safer than before.

4. Outcomes of the Review

4.1 At the conclusion of discussion the Panel agreed that points relating to the Annual Report for 2019/20 raised by Panel members would be set out in the report that it made to the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner.

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