

**Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel**  
Report of the Chairman of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel

To All Member Authorities

In accordance with agreed practice, I am reporting on matters dealt with by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at its meeting on 3 February 2025.

The main items of business were:

**Declarations of interest** - No declarations were received.

**Minutes of the Panel meeting and the Confirmation hearing held on 18 November 2024** These were approved.

**Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public** - The Panel received questions for the Commissioner from Mr G Jones of Support Staffordshire and Mr Stokes. The Commissioners written response to both Mr Jones and Mr Stocks questions were attached to the agenda pack.

**Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.** The decisions made by the Commissioner since the last meeting which were listed on the agenda were noted. No questions were asked by the Panel.

**Proposed Police Budget and Precept 2025/26** - The Commissioner introduced his report which set out the proposed budget and precept proposals for the Police and Crime element of his portfolio for 2025/26. He reported that the proposed budget/precept showed a total net revenue budget requirement of £277.640m for 2025/26.

The Commissioner proposed to part fund the balance from Council Tax funding of £106.274m with an increase of 5.12% per annum (an increase of £14 per annum) increasing the Council tax to £287.57 per Band D property.

The Commissioner stated that this years budget setting had been particularly difficult due to the late information on funding, some of which had been received from Central Government only the week before the meeting and after the panel agenda papers had been published. The budget requirement (£277.640m) meant a precept requirement amounting to 38% of funding for the Police Service in Staffordshire.

During 2024/25 the force had demonstrated improvement and had successfully managed unforeseen events such as the public disorder in summer in Stoke on Trent and Tamworth. The results of the public consultation showed that the majority of those who had responded, supported an increase in order to continue to invest.

The MTFS showed the majority of savings identified last year had been met. This Commissioner explained that this would need to continue during 2025/26.

The Panel was informed that the Government had announced an additional sum of £3m for Neighbourhood Policing providing it was spent on specific, nationally designed targets not locally identified priorities.

The Panel also received a presentation from the Forces Section 151 Officer, which gave some background to the national picture. The increase in pay, national insurance increase and the incremental pay progression for officers recruited under the uplift programme was a local cost issue for 2025/26 and meant that more funding needed to be found locally.

The Commissioners also reminded the Panel that the budget covered the Commissioner's office which had made significant saving over recent years and the Victims Grant which had also reduced by 5% in the recent settlement.

The report included the following documents:

1. Budget Report 2025/26 including Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
2. Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26
3. Reserves Strategy update
4. Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29.

The Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 set out proposals for the management of the Commissioner's cash flows, borrowing and investments and their associated risks.

The Reserves Strategy update paper considered the overall level of reserves held on 31 March 2024 and the forecast position at 31 March 2025.

The Capital Strategy and Capital Programme (Including Minimum Revenue Provision Policy) set out the long-term capital investment and investment decisions.

A summary of the results of the public and stakeholder engagement survey which had been carried out by the Commissioner were included in the papers.

In addition to the information in the report, the following was gained during the discussion and questioning:

- The Panel were informed that an expectation of the Government's additional funding was that the precept was increased by the maximum amount.
- The Joint Transport Service had seen welcomed improvement in the turnround of fleet repairs/maintenance and reduced costs factored into the 2025/26 MTFS.
- The Capital programme of £90m was for estate works and station upgrades and digital and technology improvements.
- Both Police and Fire services were investing in electric vehicles which were suitable for some parts of the service. It was reported that government funding for this transition was not available. There were some issues with charging times and vehicles being unavailable, and the distance some cars could cover at speed which limited their use on high speed/ long distance travel. Some hybrids were working well, more information would be available at the next meeting which would cover Fire services. The Government had been made aware as this was a national issue.
- Procurement is continually challenged. Procurement savings were strong and there had been local opportunities with the Fire Service to make savings by buying as one.
- Maintenance backlogs were across the estate. Some stations had received considerable investment and there were plans to improve the estate and clear the backlog or maintenance issues. The Capital programme had increased over recent years to fund the improvements.
- Expert witness savings were based on forecast use and there were no plans to reduce their usage.
- The Commissioner felt that all savings needed to be considered even very small ones as there would inevitably be a time when vacant posts needed to be reviewed to make savings.
- The 'unallocated savings' plan referred to in the MTFS report (page 47 of the pack) of £873k did not refer to unidentified

saving, but ones that had not yet been allocated to a specific budget heading.

- With reference to para 1.9 of the report it was noted that some of the vacant posts were in the Specialist Crime Command and Public Protection Unit. It was explained that it would need to be the right balance for Staffordshire and should not be dictated by national policy.
- Neighbourhood policing was a priority for the Commissioner, and he welcomed being set performance targets nationally but felt that it was for the Chief Constable at a local level to decide how the targets were to be met.
- It was confirmed that risk assessments were carried out on every operational decision including savings.
- Concerns over funding and the direction from central government on local operation issues had been raised by Staffordshire along with other regional areas.

The Panel adjourned to consider their response to the Commissioners budget and precept proposals. Upon reconvening, the Chair reported that the Panel unanimously supported the 5.12 % increase. The Panel felt that the public needed to be able to see the benefits of the transformation plans and investments in terms of reducing crime and improving service. The Panel requested that the Commissioner consider how investments and efficiencies could be visibly linked to the key performance indicators and performance monitoring at his performance meetings with the Chief Constable.

The Panel approved: **1Budget and Precept setting:**

- a) That the proposed budget and Precept increase of 5.1%, increasing the council tax to £287.57 for a band D property (£14.00 per annum, per household increase) be supported and the Commissioner be notified accordingly.
- b) That the Council Tax base increase to 369,558 band D equivalent properties, equivalent to an increase of 1.01% be noted.
- c) That the use of £3.645m of revenue reserves to balance the 2025/26 budget (in addition to use of other earmarked reserves to support identified purposes) be noted.
- d) That the MTFS summary financials and MTFS assumptions as contained in the report be noted.
- e) That the assumption that there will be a requirement to invest in full the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee funding of £1.5m; for the purposes of setting the budget, (assumed for

- officer pay) be noted (noted that the conditions of use, or performance metrics, for the grant have yet to be published).
- f) That the delegation to the Director of Finance for the Staffordshire Commissioners Office and the Chief Finance Officer of Staffordshire Police to make any necessary adjustments to the budget as a result of late changes to central government funding (including changes due to the final funding settlement being announced) via an appropriation to or from the general fund reserve be noted.
  - g) That the proposed four-year Capital Investment Programme totalling £90.569m and the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme Paper be noted.
  - h) That the outcome of the Staffordshire Commissioner's budget consultation within the Commissioners foreword which included a survey regarding the proposed level of precept for 2025/26 be noted.

2. That the Commissioner be requested to consider how investments and efficiencies could be visibly linked to the key performance indicators and performance monitoring with the Chief Constable.

**Police Misconduct and Complaint Regulations 2020 - annual report** -To enable full consideration of the report, it was agreed that the report be considered at the next meeting of the panel.

**Appointment of Co-optee member** - The Panel were informed that interviews had taken place during November 2024 for the vacant position of Co-optee on the Panel. Mr Christopher Elliott was appointed for a 4 year term.

**Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members** - No further questions were asked.

**Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme** - The next meeting of the Panel would be held on 10 February 2025 to consider the Fire and Rescue Budget and Precept 2025/26.

Webcast can be found at [Browse meetings - Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel - Staffordshire County Council](#)

For more information on these meetings or on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in general please contact Mandy Pattinson  
e mail [mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk)

*Details of Panel meetings are issued to contact officers in each of the District/Borough Councils in the County and Stoke-on-Trent City Council for posting on their own web sites.*

Councillor Bernard Peters (Chair)  
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel