

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANELS



<b>Report title:</b> Chairman's annual report	
<b>Report to:</b> National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels – AGM	
<b>Report author:</b> John Gili-Ross, Chairman	
<b>Date:</b> 9 November 2023	<b>For:</b> Information
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Emma Tombs, Support Officer to the NAPFCP, <a href="mailto:emma.tombs@essex.gov.uk">emma.tombs@essex.gov.uk</a>	

### NAPFCP Annual Report - November 2023

Welcome to the fifth Annual General Meeting of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels which again Frontline Consulting is kindly hosting as a lead into this year's Annual Conference for Police (Fire) and Crime Panels.

In this report when using the term PCC or Commissioner, this can be interchanged with PFCC and likewise, use of the term PCP or panel can be interchanged with PFCP as appropriate.

The local elections held last May resulted, for some panels, in significant change to their membership and hence the experience in providing effective PCC challenge. The membership of some panels changed by as much as a third. Whilst change can be beneficial the significant downside is the loss of knowledge and continuity which takes time to replace but is greatly assisted if quality panel training is undertaken. I strongly recommend that panels adequately budget for member training.

We have become accustomed to workshops and training being held by remote means and many find this both time and cost effective. There are still though significant benefits for sessions held in the traditional manner, and face to face sessions do help members feel part of a collective team as well as providing more effective networking opportunities.

Currently there are 39 (out of a maximum 41) panels in membership including all four Welsh panels. The influence of the NAPFCP within the sector will always be judged by the strength of its membership, therefore the target will always be 100% membership.

### Executive Committee

There are 10 members of the Executive Committee, each having valuable skills and capabilities with some having served on panels since 2012. In addition, the skills and experience of this committee is strengthened by invited "observers" who are welcome and encouraged to attend our monthly meetings. During the past 12 months the Executive Committee's focus has been on adding value through providing advice

directly to panels when requested, completing consultation responses, liaising with key partners or producing supportive materials and sector related press articles. NAPFCP workload is spread amongst executive committee members according to their availability and knowledge and skills. The Executive Committee continues to meet to discuss and review any sector specific developments and when appropriate forwarding details to member panels.

Evan Morris MBE, in his role of vice chair, has formed a productive relationship with the College of Policing to explore ways of allowing their research material to be made available to panel members. Whilst this will be an ongoing project it is already showing benefits and it is hoped this will continue as the relationship matures. Whilst the research relates largely to operational policing, which is out with a panel's remit, it does provide interesting reading and may help form non-operational lines of enquiry between the panel and the PCC. This [link](#) provides a useful example of the value of the police college library and helps with a broader understanding of policing

One Executive Committee member, Cllr Susan Waring, decided not to stand for the local election last May and therefore stepped down from the Executive Committee. My thanks go to her for her contribution to the NAPFCP. Panels were advised of the vacancy in June, and applications were invited. After careful consideration Paul Downing (Bedfordshire) was co-opted and has already proved to be a welcome addition.

## **Consultations Addressed During the Year**

### **Outcomes from the PCC Review Part 2**

Following the outcome of the PCC Review Part 2, the Home Office invested in providing additional training material and videos relating to the work of panels. Last December and January, the Home Office appointed consultants Leapwise to undertake a number of workshops to help determine whether centralised panel support should be implemented. Members of the Executive Committee attended each of these workshops to assist in the debate. These workshops were helpful, although the running theme that support for the administration of complaints against the PCC or their deputy would be of benefit did not seem to register. Following the workshops the Home Office continues to explore the viability of providing centralised panel support and they are in the process of approaching panels seeking to ascertain whether lead authorities could host this support function. The outcome of this investigation is awaited.

### **College of Policing Consultation on the Revised Code of Ethics**

The NAPFCP provided a response to this consultation, that sought to gather views on the revised Code of Ethics. To date the outcomes of this exercise have not been published.

### **Home Affairs Select Committee**

The Home Affairs Select Committee directly invited the association to provide input to its inquiry into how well the PCC / PCP system is operating now that it is more than 10 years old. The HASC inquiry covered nine topic areas and the association developed its responses using the experiences of Executive Committee members. The LGA

additionally asked the association to forward a shortened version (at only two questions) to all panels in order to contribute to the LGA's response, however the deadline provided was extremely short and in most cases would be insufficient for panel responses to be formally approved.

### **Key Lines of Enquiries**

HMICFRS has issued many performance reports on both county policing and fire and rescue services following on from their inspections. It is suggested that Panels could consider using these reports to form key lines of enquiry relevant to their PCC. Asking challenging questions based on the contents of the HMICFRS reports and then asking for regular progress updates can add constructively to panel challenge and debate. In addition, this could form the basis of what panels expect to see included as priorities in the police and crime and, where applicable, fire and rescue plans developed by the PCC following next year's elections.

Some panels will be preparing for budget and precept discussions proposed by the PCC for the 2024/25 period. Not all PCCs welcome panel engagement in these discussions, but others welcome the opportunity to share the constraints and challenges that underpin the finances for policing and fire and rescue. If PCCs do not consider there are benefits from this early panel engagement, this should not prevent a panel from asking to be kept informed of the material drivers that underpin the budget.

The NAPFCP continues to recommend that panels enquire as to how recruitment and vetting of new officers and support staff is undertaken and what behaviour monitoring for established personnel is in place to ensure high levels of integrity among staff. The public would expect these questions are asked by the commissioner of the relevant services and panels should be able to examine the process and understand its effectiveness.

### **Training and Advice**

The sector continues to benefit from the learning and networking workshops provided by Frontline Consulting through its regional workshops. These sessions are open to support officers, chairs and panel members and allow participants to share their experiences both good and bad. For support officers in particular these workshops provide an excellent opportunity to network and meet the challenges of panel support.

At its last meeting, the executive committee agreed to investigate how best to set up a series of remote meetings, (possibly three per year), to provide space for discussion and information sharing for panel chairs and vice chairs. More news on this will be sent to panels following the AGM.

Regrettably and largely as a result of illness the LGA were not in a position to run a workshop during the year to complement the regional events run by Frontline Consulting for panels.

I would encourage support officers to seek advice from the NAPFCP whenever there is a need and particularly for new officers taking up the role for the first time. Executive Committee members are always willing to help and provide advice for panel members. As a highly experience democratic services manager, Emma Tombs provides the NAPFCP with not only excellent support but through her significant

experience in all aspects of panel work, is ideally positioned to advise and share her experience with other panel support officers.

## Closing Remarks

I am extremely pleased to report the improving direct relationship between the association and the Home Office. Good professional relationships take time to establish and to develop trust on all sides. A number of meetings have taken place over the last 12 months and we now have quarterly meetings to discuss items of interest within the sector.

The relationship between the LGA and APCC continues to strengthen in a spirit of mutual benefit and I would like to thank each for their support.

I would like to thank Dave Burn of Frontline Consulting for the great work he has done within the sector in providing training and practical governance advice and for hosting the AGM this year.

Thanks goes to the Executive Committee members for the support they give to the association and to me personally throughout the year.

Thanks also to the various Panel Chairs / Vice Chairs and support officers for sharing their panel experiences. Their support and advice is greatly appreciated and helps shape my thinking on the many diverse areas of panel working.

Finally, and most importantly my heartfelt thanks goes to Emma Tombs for her professionalism, knowledge and the sound advice she provides to the NAPFCP and to me in particular.

I hope you enjoy the AGM and most importantly the Frontline 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Gili-Ross". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a thin yellow rectangular border.

John Gili-Ross  
Chair - National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels  
07957804621