

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL**  
**REPORT TO THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**  
**FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

**16 DECEMBER 2024**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Review of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's draft Police, Fire and Crime Plan 2025-30</b>
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**1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1. The report is intended to set out the results of the review by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's draft Police, Fire and Crime Plan 2025-30.

**2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1 The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire is required to produce a Police and Crime Plan and a Fire and Rescue Plan setting out her priorities and objectives for these areas of responsibility. The two plans may be combined into a single Police, Fire and Crime Plan. The Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel must review and give a response to the draft Plan before the Commissioner may issue the Plan. The Panel carried out this review at a meeting on 5 December 2024.

**3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 It is recommended that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire:
- a) Considers this report by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel arising from its review of her draft Police, Fire and Crime Plan 2025-30 in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 sections 5(6)(d) and 28(3).
  - b) Gives the Panel a response to this report and its recommendations set out in section 6 in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 section 5(6)(e).

- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation(s) – The recommendations are required to complete the Panel’s review of the draft Police, Fire and Crime Plan 2025-30 sent to it by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, in accordance with the Panel’s statutory responsibilities.

#### **4. Report Background**

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##### Police and Crime Plan

- 4.1 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 sections 5 and 7 state that a Police and Crime commissioner (PCC) must issue a Police and Crime Plan setting out the following matters:
- a) the PCC’s objectives for the policing of the police area; for crime and disorder reduction in that area; and for the discharge by the police force of its national or international functions
  - b) the policing of the police area which the chief officer of police is to provide
  - c) the financial and other resources which the PCC is to provide to the chief officer of police for the chief officer to exercise their functions
  - d) the means by which the chief officer of police will report to the PCC on the chief officer's provision of policing
  - e) the means by which the chief officer of police's performance in providing policing will be measured
  - f) services to be provided or commissioned by the PCC to contribute to crime and disorder reduction in the police area and to support victims and witnesses of criminal offences and anti-social behaviour
  - g) any grants which the PCC is to make in relation to crime and disorder reduction and support for victims and witnesses and the conditions applying to any such grants.
- 4.2 A PCC must issue a Police and Crime Plan within the financial year in which an ordinary election is held, doing so as soon as practicable after taking office. A PCC may also issue a new Police and Crime Plan or a variation of an existing Plan at any other time.
- 4.3 Before a PCC issues a Police and Crime Plan, or a Plan variation, the PCC must send a draft Plan to the relevant Police and Crime panel. Section 28(3) of the 2011 Act requires the panel to review the draft Plan and to make a report or recommendations on it to the PCC. The report or recommendations by the panel must also be published.
- 4.4 The PCC must have regard to any report or recommendations made by the panel on a draft Plan, respond to the panel and publish that response. The PCC may then issue the Plan.

##### Fire and Rescue Plan

- 4.5 The Policing and Crime Act 2017 schedule 1 and the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England state that a Police, Fire and Crime commissioner must issue a Fire and Rescue Plan setting out the commissioner’s strategic vision, priorities and objectives in connection with the discharge of the commissioner’s functions as the Fire and Rescue authority. The National Framework sets the following priorities for all Fire and Rescue authorities:

- to make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents
- to identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face
- to collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide
- to be accountable to communities for the service they provide
- to develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

4.6 The government expects a Police, Fire and Crime commissioner to issue a Fire and Rescue Plan ‘shortly after’ the commissioner takes office. A commissioner may also revise an existing Plan at any other time. A combined Fire and Rescue and Police and Crime Plan may be produced: in this case the combined Plan must set out both policing and Fire and Rescue priorities and objectives.

4.7 A draft Fire and Rescue Plan, or draft Plan variation, is subject to the same scrutiny process detailed in paragraphs 4.3-4.4 of this report.

## **5. Review of the draft Police, Fire and Crime Plan 2025-30**

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5.1 The Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel (“the Panel”) met in public on 5 December 2024 to review the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire’s draft Police, Fire and Crime Plan 2025-30. The webcast of the meeting is available to view at: [Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel - 5 December 2024](#).

5.2 The Commissioner was pleased to present the draft Police, Fire and Crime Plan (“the Plan”) and emphasised that it had been informed by extensive consultation, through her Big Conversation and workshops on different focus areas. The Commissioner hoped that people would see that the resulting Plan reflected their input and priorities. The Plan had the overarching goal of supporting public safety and set out three missions: visible and accessible community services; professionalism and standards; and stronger public safety partnerships. The Plan also set out four tests that would be used to shape strategies to deliver the missions: safer communities; safer victims; sound leadership; and sound money management. There was a significant amount of work to do in the county, particularly with regard to cultural change in Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS). However, all concerned agreed what needed to be done and progress was being made. The Commissioner had seen that Northamptonshire faced the same challenges as other force areas in relation to prevention, early intervention, improving the operation of the criminal justice system and identifying effective ways of keeping communities safe. Partnership working was a key part of this and the Commissioner wanted partnership meetings to become more focussed and productive, with more direct involvement from decision-makers. Ultimately, the Commissioner was positive that the Plan addressed the right areas. Operational plans for policing, fire and rescue and the services provided by the Commissioner’s office would be developed to sit under the Plan. The Plan would now be subject to further public consultation linked to consultation on the proposed precepts

for 2025/26 and the Commissioner urged Panel members to encourage participation in this process.

- 5.3 The Panel then questioned the Commissioner on the aims of the Plan and how it would make a difference to the residents of Northamptonshire.
- 5.4 A Panel member commented that the Plan seemed reasonable overall. Residents would judge the Plan in terms of its practical, visible impact and the resources that the Commissioner provided to support community safety in the county. However, the strategic direction it set out seemed to be right. The fact that the Plan proposed to continue good work in areas such as early intervention and joint working between the force and NFRS was welcome. The degree of continuity reflected in the Plan as a whole was positive, rather than the Commissioner seeking to make change for the sake of it. The Commissioner stated that the Plan did involve new directions in areas including neighbourhood policing and visible policing. Ethical leadership was also a priority and she was proud that action taken by the force to improve vetting was now informing the national approach.
- 5.5 A Panel member emphasised the importance of language and challenged the Commissioner on references in the Plan to making communities 'safe'. The Plan should refer to making communities 'safer': data showed that Northamptonshire was generally a safe area in which to live, particularly in rural areas. The Commissioner emphasised that rural areas did face issues, some of which were more visible than others, such as county lines, speeding traffic, hare coursing and theft of farm machinery by criminal gangs. This had been highlighted to the Commissioner through engagement with the farming community early in her tenure. She planned to set up a rural crime roundtable to assist in addressing these matters. Individual perspectives on community safety in the county also differed between men and women, older and younger people and for people of different ethnicities. Effective community engagement was vital because it enabled these differences and nuances to be understood.
- 5.6 A Panel member noted that the Plan referred to the perception that Northamptonshire Police was an inexperienced force after recent increases in the number of officers. The Commissioner was challenged about how this situation would be addressed. The Commissioner advised that she wanted the force to strengthen the occupational health support available to officers. It was also proposed to mitigate the pressure on response teams by providing additional resources to bring in more experienced investigators.
- 5.7 A Panel member supported the Plan but suggested that it would be helpful for it to include a 'plan on a page' style summary. The Panel was informed that it was intended to add this once the Plan was finalised.
- 5.8 A Panel member commented that the Plan expressed the Commissioner's stated priorities very well. However, concerns had previously been raised that NFRS did not have sufficient resources to operate safely and reassurance was sought that this would be addressed as part of the Plan. The Commissioner responded that NFRS was currently carrying out an emergency cover review that would help it to deal with challenges including the need for more wholetime and retained

firefighters. The Commissioner believed that this was likely to identify opportunities to address some issues. The Commissioner supported that the resources deployed to an incident should be appropriate to its scale.

- 5.9 A Panel member welcomed the Plan and the aspiration it showed. The challenge would be to turn it into practical actions that made a difference. The Commissioner was urged to maintain her commitment when doing this as it would take time to achieve an impact. It was highlighted in this context that the approach to providing visible, accessible community services set out in the Plan had similarities to the crime and anti-social behaviour partnership (CASPAR) model operated by the force from the late 1990s, which had not been maintained. The Commissioner would also need to support the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer to implement this approach in the context of potential competing requirements, such as the focus areas that HMICFRS used to assess performance. The Commissioner stated that she was proud to have already achieved a positive step in relation to HMICFRS by making a case that its performance assessments should be more contextualised. HMICFRS had now agreed to do this.
- 5.10 A Panel member agreed with the principle of managing the number of partnership meetings and making them as productive as possible. The Plan referred to creating a Public Safety Board for the county for strategic oversight, delivery and investment. The Commissioner was questioned about she would ensure this body was worthwhile. The Commissioner responded that the proposed Public Safety Board should be a body involving strategic leaders that took decisions.
- 5.11 Panel members commented on the importance of the force engaging with local community groups, including parish councils and local area partnerships. A Panel member highlighted that the force had not been represented at a children, young people and families summit held in Northampton the previous day, which had been focussed on bringing together partners to try to address issues affecting the local community. The Commissioner agreed that there should have been more awareness of this event as supporting children and young people was a priority for her and the focus of a range of activity by her office.

## **6. Outcomes of the Review**

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- 6.1 The Panel considered its overall conclusions and recommendations on the Plan. It was recognised that Panel members were generally supportive of the strategic direction it proposed. At the conclusion of discussion it was resolved that:
- a) The Panel endorses the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner’s draft Police, Fire and Crime Plan 2025-30.**
  - b) The Panel recommends that the final version of the Police, Fire and Crime Plan 2025-30 includes a ‘plan on a page’ style summary.**

## **7. Background Papers**

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Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

Policing and Crime Act 2017

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Rules of Procedure

Policing and fire governance – Local Government Association and Centre for Governance and Scrutiny guidance for police and crime panels (2019)

Police, fire and crime panels guidance – Home Office (2023)