



# Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

2023/24 Annual Report

June 2024

## **Overview:**

- The past year has seen improved performance in policing, inherited weaknesses being addressed in fire and rescue, and continued success in commissioned services and the office's statutory functions against a challenging backdrop ahead of elections in May 2024. This report refers to delivery under the previous Commissioner, Stephen Mold. Danielle Stone began her tenure as the new Commissioner in May 2024.

## **Northamptonshire Police:**

- The latest HMICFRS inspection report demonstrated how the Force has made improvements across most areas and in particular how it communicates with communities to identify local problems and gathers intelligence. Since its last inspection, the Force has improved its performance in six of the nine areas of work measured by the Inspectorate. Inspectors graded it outstanding in the way it records crime.
- Northamptonshire Police has seen an increase in the number of officers, which now stands at over 1500, the highest number in the history of the Force.
- There are now more front-line police officers, meaning an increase in the number of officers serving in neighbourhood teams, which will be enhanced with extra policing patrols in areas with high levels of anti-social behaviour.
- Specific areas of investment include nearly £600,000 allocated to improve the quality of crime investigations and to meet the training needs of the Force, including new recruits. A further £800,000 was allocated to the Force control room, to help meet the growing demand in emergency calls from the public – an area that the Inspectors also said needed to improve.
- The Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner secured £3 million to increase patrols in anti-social behaviour hotspots and to support a scheme ensuring that those that engage in this activity repair the damage they cause.

## **Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service:**

- The Fire and Rescue Service was inspected this year and the inspectorate report will be received this summer. It is anticipated that this will reflect the significant investment made to address challenges inherited when fire came under the Commissioner's oversight.
- Additional funding has seen an increase in the number of Wholetime firefighters from 242 to 254 and a £10 million capital investment programme has transformed the Service, giving firefighters access to modern equipment and replacing outdated systems. This includes eight new next-generation fire engines now based at stations across the county, with a further four to be delivered and a new 42-metre turntable ladder, improving the Fire Service's ability to deal with incidents at high-rise buildings and large commercial premises.
- The prevention work of the service has also seen almost 6,000 Home Fire Safety Visits carried out by crews and the Prevention team over the last 12 months, helping to protect the most vulnerable residents from fire risks.

## **Commissioned Programmes:**

### ***Victims Services***

- Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners (PFCCs) have the statutory responsibility for commissioning support services for victims and witnesses of crime, to help individuals cope with and recover from the consequences. Voice is a free, confidential support service for victims and witnesses of crime, life-changing fire incidents and serious road traffic collisions in Northamptonshire. 2023/24 saw 43,458 referrals into Voice which works to:
  - Provide emotional and practical support to anyone affected by crime.
  - Link with partner agencies to ensure the right specialist support is available for everyone.
  - Offer help and guidance to anyone who has to attend court proceedings.
  - Promote involvement in the criminal justice system by informing people about their rights.

## ***Complaints***

1. The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner now has a much greater role and oversight of the police complaints system. Throughout 2023/24, the OPFCC Customer Service Team has dealt with 3,007 contacts from members of the public, which includes complaints, queries, and requests for complaint reviews.
1. The team also reviews complaints finalised by the Force Professional Standards Department to ensure an effective complaint handling process for those which are referred to the police for investigation.
1. From 1 April 2023, the OPFCC Customer Service Team have been responsible for the management of the Fire and Rescue Service's complaints process to free up the Service's capacity to deal with operational demands and enable more effective oversight.

## ***Keeping the community safe***

- The Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has secured nearly £5million in funding in recent years from the Home Office Safer Streets Fund, which has been invested in crime prevention with local authorities, Northamptonshire Police and other partners. The schemes delivered include: .
  - 120 new council monitored high-definition CCTV cameras installed
  - 5,000 homes receiving over £100 worth of free home security.
  - 155 alley gates protecting residents from burglary, robbery, anti-social behaviour, fly tipping & rubbish.
  - 1600 front/back doors replaced.
  - 600 officers trained in policing the night-time economy
  - 30 ID scans installed in late night premises across the county.
  - 5,000 security packs for students.
  - 8 help points installed in public locations.
  - The Flare app to report crime/feelings of unsafety anonymously.
- Our award-winning Cyber Security Forum is helping Northamptonshire businesses protect themselves from cybercrime with free prevention advice, and expert briefings, helping them reduce the likelihood of disruption due to cybercrime.

## ***Supporting young people***

- Innovative provision has been commissioned to improve young lives and support families in Northamptonshire. A specialist Early Intervention and Youth team, employed by the PFCC, provides additional support to families and vulnerable young people who are at increased risk of becoming victims of crime or are likely to become involved in criminal behaviour.
- The team provides a range of preventative services targeting families where there are issues with domestic incidents, risk of exclusion from school or involvement in crime. This work helps to divert young people away from crime and safeguard them from criminal exploitation.

## ***Criminal Justice***

1. Through the Commissioner's leadership of the Local Criminal Justice Board, we work closely with the police and local CJS partners to review performance. This includes compliance with the Attorney General Director's Guidance for submission of cases to court, performance in relation to hearings per case, conviction and discontinuance rates, and CPS timeliness of charging decisions, processes, outcomes, impact, and quality across the CJS.
2. A new shared strategy on Serious Violence, developed using the Commissioner's convening powers, sets a course for improvement in this crucial area.
3. An effective Independent Custody Visiting scheme has been maintained whereby volunteers from the local community provide independent scrutiny which offers mutual protection to detainees and the police, and reassurance to the community.

## ***Joint Independent Audit Committee***

- The Joint Independent Audit Committee provides independent assurance on the adequacy of the corporate governance and risk management arrangements in place and the associated control environment, advising according to good governance principles and proper practices. The Committee supports the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Chief Constable and statutory officers in ensuring that effective governance are in place and functioning efficiently and effectively and making any recommendations for improvement.
- The JIAC produce an annual report and a copy can be downloaded from the OPFCC website at: <https://northantspfcc.org.uk/category/opfcc/accountability-opfcc/joint-independent-audit-committee/>

## ***Budgets***

- The OPFCC, Police and Fire were able to robustly manage expenditure throughout the year and provisional indications are that 2023/24 budgeted expenditure was not exceeded, with small underspends used to bolster reserves pending the development of the new PFCC's Police, Fire and Crime Plan.
- Following the 2023/24 outturn, the level of earmarked reserves for Police and Fire are around £23.8m and £5.0m respectively.
- As reported to the Panel in February 2024, the budgets for 2024/25 are balanced, and plans are underway to deliver efficiencies and meet future financial challenges.



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