



Cumbria
**Police, Fire and
Crime Panel**

Annual Report 2024-25





Foreword from the Chair

As Chair of the Cumbria Police, Fire and Crime Panel, I am pleased to introduce the Panel's Annual Report for 2024-2025.

During the year we welcomed a newly elected Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria and had the opportunity to comment on the new Police, Fire and Crime Plan 2025-29 for Cumbria during its development.

In the first half of the 2024-25 year, we undertook a thorough and well-subscribed recruitment process for a new Independent Co-opted Member of the Panel and successfully appointed Fiona Musgrave.

Throughout the year we continued to support and scrutinise the work of the Commissioner and in January 2025 held a Confirmation Hearing for the position of Chief Fire Officer. We also had a valuable informal budget briefing session with the Commissioner and his Office, which included a tour and familiarisation of the operations of Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Panel over the last year for their commitment and contributions, and to the Commissioner and his staff for the co-operative and proactive approach to the Panel's work.



Councillor Bill McEwan
Chair, Cumbria Police, Fire and Crime Panel



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Role of the Panel

Police and Crime Panels were established in England in 2012 to provide a check and balance function in relation to the function of the newly introduced Police and Crime Commissioners. The remit of the Panel includes reviewing and scrutinising the decisions and actions of the Commissioner in connection with the discharge of the Commissioner's functions. The Panel have oversight of some of the Commissioner's key documents, reports and decisions and can require them to provide information or answer any questions that the Panel considers necessary to carry out its own functions.

With the advent of local government reorganisation on 1st April 2023, transfer of governance for the Fire and Rescue Service was included in the Commissioner's responsibilities. The remit of the Panel was extended to become the Cumbria Police, Fire and Crime Panel (PFCP) to reflect the widening of its scrutiny and support functions.

The Cumbria Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) has responsibility for setting the direction, objectives and budgets of Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, and for holding the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer to account.

The PFCC is ultimately accountable to the public. Outside of the four-yearly election cycle, the Panel continues to provide the key scrutiny and accountability mechanism for the decisions and activities undertaken by the PFCC. The role of the Panel is to scrutinise and support the performance of the Commissioner and specifically to conduct the following statutory functions (as set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011):

- To review and make recommendations on the Commissioner's proposed level of Council Tax precept for policing and fire. The Panel has a power of veto for the Commissioner's first precept proposal.
- To review and make recommendations on the Commissioner's draft Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan.
- To review and make recommendations on the Commissioner's draft Annual Report for Police and Crime and Fire and Rescue.
- To review and make recommendations on proposed senior appointments in the Commissioner's Office, including the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer (in addition to some other senior roles). The Panel has the power to veto proposed appointments for the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer.
- To consider non-criminal complaints made against the Commissioner.



Membership

The Panel is a joint committee and comprises ten elected members (five from Westmorland and Furness Council, five from Cumberland Council) and two co-opted independent members. Westmorland and Furness Council provides support to the Panel on behalf of both councils.

Membership during 2024-25:

Cllr Bill McEwan (Chair)	Westmorland and Furness Council
Cllr Tim Pickstone (Vice Chair)	Cumberland Council
Cllr Janet Battye	Westmorland and Furness Council
Cllr Judith Derbyshire	Westmorland and Furness Council
Cllr Helen Irving	Westmorland and Furness Council
Cllr Mike Johnson	Cumberland Council
Cllr Bob Kelly	Cumberland Council
Jonathan Little	Independent Co-optee
Cllr Carni McCarron-Holmes	Cumberland Council
Fiona Musgrave	Independent Co-optee (from October 2024)
Cllr Matt Severn	Westmorland and Furness Council
Cllr Gillian Troughton	Cumberland Council



Panel Activity during 2024-2025

The Panel held five formal meetings during 2024-2025. The meetings were open to the public and supported delivery of the Panel's statutory responsibilities. The agendas and minutes for the Panel's meetings can be viewed on the Westmorland and Furness Committee pages: [Browse meetings - Police, Fire and Crime Panel | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

Summary of Activity

May 2024

- Elections held for new **Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**
- **PFCP Meeting:**
 - First formal meeting with new PFCC
 - PFCC outlines **election pledges** for **Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service**
 - PFCC presents **process & timeline** for new **Police, Fire & Crime Plan**

July 2024

- **General Election** results in **change of national government**
- **PFCP Meeting:**
 - PFCC gives **verbal update** on national policy direction for Police & Fire
 - Panel reviews:
 - Former **PFCC's Annual Report 2023-24**
 - **Agrees** its own **Police, Fire and Crime Annual Report 2023-24**
 - **Agrees sub-group** for **Independent Co-opted Member** recruitment

Summer 2024

- **Recruitment** of new **Independent Co-opted Member**
 - Thorough selection process
 - Preferred candidate selected
- OPFCC carries out **consultation** on **Police, Fire & Crime Plan**
 - Dedicated **PFCP consultation session** with OPFCC

October 2024

- **PFCP Meeting:**
 - **Panel approves:**
 - Appointment of new Independent Co-optee
 - Re-appointment of existing Co-optee for second term
- **Endorsement** of new **Police, Fire & Crime Plan 2025-29**
- Reviews revised OPFCC **Accountability Frameworks**
- **Presentation** from **Cumbria Pathways Programme**

January 2025

- **Informal meeting:**
 - Briefing on budgets, capital programmes & proposed precept levels
 - Tour & demonstrations at Fire and Rescue HQ
- **PFCP Meeting:**
 - Budgets and precepts formally presented and agreed
- **PFCP Meeting:**
 - Approval of new Chief Fire Officer after Confirmation Hearing

Delivering the statutory functions of the Panel

Review the Commissioner's proposed Police and Fire and Rescue Council Tax precept

Policing Precept

At the 31st January 2025 meeting of the Panel, the Commissioner proposed an increase in the policing precept of 4.50%. This was an increase of £13.95 per annum for a Band D property taking the total Police element of the precept at Band D to £324. He reported that the Constabulary had continued to achieve excellence as demonstrated by the HMICFRS inspection report that had been received in mid-2024. To maintain that level of performance and build on it, the Commissioner needed to set a budget that enabled the Chief Constable to achieve the objectives of the Police, Fire and Crime Plan. Since the election of the Commissioner, the Constabulary had been working to identify savings across the service and a detailed programme to achieve savings and efficiencies had been put in place which was already identifying areas where savings could be achieved without an impact on front-line services. Cost and inflationary pressures were impacting the Constabulary and the 4.50% increase was proposed in order to maximise the resources available for Policing. At the meeting the Chief Constable gave a detailed precis on what services the Constabulary delivered.

The Commissioner assured the Panel and gave details of the processes that had been put in place in order for him to hold the Chief Constable and Constabulary to account in how they spend taxpayers money, on behalf of the residents of Cumbria.

The Panel asked a number of questions around additional funding (for neighbourhood policing), national insurance increases, reserves, condition of the estate (in relation to the Capital Programme), cybercrime, financial resilience, borrowing, funding for antisocial behaviour and numbers of PCSO's.

The Panel noted that during the public consultation of the proposed precept level, 63% (of 1127 people who responded) had supported the proposals. After consideration of all the points, the Panel agreed to support the precept proposal.

During the year, Panel members received regular monitoring reports and information in relation to the budgets of the Commissioner and the Constabulary.



Fire and Rescue Service Precept

At the 31st January 2025 meeting of the Panel, the Commissioner proposed an increase in the fire and rescue precept of 5.31%. This was an increase of £4.95 per annum for a Band D property taking the total Fire and Rescue Service element of the precept at Band D to £98.19. In setting the proposed budget and precept he was mindful of the financial position of the Fire and Rescue Service following disaggregation from the County Council in 2023. Since then, the Service had been prudent in managing its budget. Investment was required in buildings and infrastructure, to welfare and compliance, and into fleet and equipment to enable it to perform and respond appropriately. Importantly, the Service needed to invest in its people to continue to keep the population of Cumbria safe. Cost and inflationary pressures were impacting the Fire and Rescue Service and the 5.31% increase was proposed in order to invest in the right resources. At the meeting, the Interim Chief Fire Officer gave the Panel a detailed precis on what services the Fire and Rescue Service deliver and many of these had been demonstrated, and members of the Panel able to discuss with officers from the Fire Service at the recent informal session at Fire and Rescue Service headquarters.

The Panel asked a number of questions which included topics such as the removal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant which had particularly affected Cumbria, increase in national insurance contributions, insufficiencies in government funding, levels of reserves and On-call Fire Fighters. Questions were also asked around flooding, road traffic collisions, domestic dwelling fires and blue light collaboration.

The Commissioner assured the Panel and gave details of the processes that had been put in place in order for him to hold the Chief Fire Officer and Fire and Rescue Service to account in how they spend taxpayers' money, on behalf of the residents of Cumbria.

The Panel noted that during the public consultation of the proposed precept level, 64% (of 367 people who responded) had supported the proposals. After consideration of all the points, the Panel agreed to support the precept proposal.

A number of recent major incidents had occurred within Cumbria which required extensive resource requirements from the Fire and Rescue Service. Members of the Panel formally thanked the Service for their attendance and efforts.

During the year, Panel members received regular monitoring reports and information in relation to the budgets of the Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Service.



Review and make recommendations on the Commissioner's draft Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan

During the first few months of the new Commissioner's term, he produced a draft Police, Fire and Crime Plan for Cumbria, reflecting his statutory responsibilities across both services and setting a joint strategic direction for policing, fire and rescue. The draft plan focused on the priorities and objectives identified by the Commissioner taking account of local concerns and national requirements, including the Strategic Policing Requirement.

During the public consultation phase, the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner held a bespoke online consultation session with the Panel which provided an opportunity for them comment on the draft plan and inform the development of it. The Commissioner presented his draft Police, Fire and Crime Plan to the Panel at its October public meeting where the Panel asked additional questions, made comment and sought clarification around the priorities and objectives identified as part of the consultation including anti-social driving, knife crime/serious violence duty and online crime.

In accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, as a follow up to the meeting, the Chair on behalf of the Panel wrote to the Commissioner highlighting the comments made during the meeting and that he was satisfied these had been addressed. The Panel welcomed the approach to collaborative and partnership working outlined in the Plan and development of the Delivery Plan which would detail the specific activity, timescales and milestones that will contribute to, and be used to monitor delivery against the objectives set out in the Plan.

The Commissioner's Police Fire and Crime Plan covers the period 2025-29. There are five priority areas:

- Putting People First
- Providing Visible and Accessible Services
- Protecting Vulnerable People and Communities
- Focusing on Prevention to Protect Cumbria
- Making Best Use of Resources

The Panel will review progress against at least one priority per public meeting going forward into 2025-26.

Review and make recommendations on the Commissioner's draft Annual Report for Police and Crime and Fire and Rescue

The Panel scrutinised the Commissioner's Annual Reports for both Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service for 2023-24 which covered the final year of the former Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's term.

The Police and Crime Annual Report highlighted the key areas of work over the previous 12 months and summarised progress against the former Commissioner's objectives. It included recorded crime figures, performance information and how he had carried out his statutory functions such as setting the budget and holding the Chief Constable to account. It also included information regarding the Commissioner's commissioned services. The Panel raised questions and asked for some additional information around hate crime, missing persons, cybercrime and shoplifting.

The Fire and Rescue Annual Report highlighted this was the first year with the new governance arrangements (following local government reorganisation). The report summarised progress against the five objectives, detailed the budget, provided performance data and accountability structures in place for the Commissioner to hold the Chief Fire Officer and service to account. The Panel raised questions regarding response times and regarding comparative data both year on year and on a national level and the Commissioner's Office confirmed this level of data would be included in future years' reports.

To review and make recommendations on proposed senior appointments in the Commissioner's Office

In January 2025, the Panel held a public Confirmation Hearing for the proposed appointment of a Chief Fire Officer. A report was considered by the Panel from the Commissioner detailing the criteria that was used to assess the suitability of the candidates for the roles, how the candidates had satisfied the criteria, and the terms and conditions on which the candidates were to be appointed. In its duty to ensure that the proposed candidates were suitable for these senior positions, the Panel asked questions of the candidates relating to professional competence and operational independence which enabled the Panel to evaluate the candidate's suitability for the roles.

Following the Confirmation Hearing, the Panel unanimously agreed to recommend to the Commissioner to appoint Paul Hancock to the position of Chief Fire Officer.

To consider non-criminal complaints made against the Commissioner

Prior to 1st April 2023, the Cumbria Police and Crime Panel had in place a robust complaints process which had been created following extensive work by Officers and Members. The procedure incorporated a complaints process, complaints protocol, habitual and vexatious complaints protocol, complaints form and complaints flow chart. In June 2023, the new Police, Fire and Crime Panel agreed to formally adopt the complaints procedure.

During 2024-25, the Panel received regular reports which detailed the number of complaints and what action had been taken in respect of the complaints. A complaint was received on 6 March 2025 and was addressed in line with the complaints procedure, resulting in an informal resolution.



Additional activities of the Panel

In addition to the formal meetings, the Panel also:

- Undertook a recruitment process to fill the vacant Independent Co-opted Panel Member position.
- Held a bespoke consultation session with the Office for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (in addition to the public consultation) during the development of the new Police, Fire and Crime Plan.
- Were invited to a Constabulary engagement event with an opportunity to meet Chief Officers, Commanders and senior leaders across the Constabulary to hear about the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection report and plans for the future. There were presentations covering various topics pertinent to Panel business and included a tour of the force control room and demonstrations from the Dog Section and Firearms Section.
- Held an informal budget briefing session with the Commissioner and his team in advance of considering the PFCC's budget and council tax precept proposals.
- Had a tour of Fire and Rescue Headquarters with the Panel able to meet Fire and Rescue staff and receive demonstrations of equipment and operations, as well as experience some of the interactive community engagement work the service undertakes in schools and the community.
- Held informal online pre-meetings, for example, to discuss the Commissioner's 2025/26 budget proposals and Confirmation Hearing.

Home Office Grant Funding

As host authority, Westmorland and Furness Council receives financial support through an annual grant from the Home Office to support administration of the Cumbria Police, Fire and Crime Panel. This grant covers the costs of administration (including, support staff, specialist advice, recruitment of independent members, printing and postage) and Panel member expenses (including training, independent member allowances, national conference). The grant claim for 2024-25 was £63,374.98.

The Panel's grant claim for 2024-25 was considered by Westmorland and Furness Council's Internal Audit service as part of the financial management assurance framework and was submitted to the Home Office for approval in June 2025.

Forward Look

The Panel looks forward to continuing the effective relationship it has built with the Commissioner and his team over the first year of his term.

With regards to the work programme, the Panel will visit at least one of the priorities set out in the Police, Fire and Crime Plan per meeting for an in-depth review of progress against that priority. The Panel will also continue to look at and seek reassurance of the Commissioner's commissioned services.

