

2024



COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL

ANNUAL REPORT

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Foreword from the Panel Chair

Welcome to the Community Scrutiny Panel Annual Report for 2024. This joint Panel promotes and influences high standards of ethical performance across the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service. Being entirely independent it provides robust assurance to the residents of Cumbria by investigating, dip sampling, constructively challenging and reviewing a broad range of aspects of policy, process and performance, through the lens of ethics and integrity.

I have had the pleasure of being Chair of the Community Scrutiny Panel since the beginning of 2024, having been a member of the Panel since 2022 and prior to that volunteering as an independent custody visitor.

Over the last 12 months we have continued to see challenge and change for the people of Cumbria. This can be attributed to many reasons, not least us still dealing with legacy issues from the pandemic; the increasing challenges of the cost-of-living crisis, and of course societal issues and political instability that affect us all in both the UK and abroad. The Panel have been hugely impressed by each organisations' resilience, commitment, focus and determination to serve our county; constantly striving to offer both the fire and rescue and the policing services that the public expect. This is of great credit to the organisations and their officers and staff.

While 2024 has been an incredibly challenging year, we have enhanced our work programme, adapted to look at a number of thematic areas and recruited additional members to the Panel broadening our capability, insight and diversity. The information in this, and our other quarterly reports, helps to promote a wider understanding and awareness of performance and ethical approach of both Fire and Rescue and the Constabulary.

We hope that you find the report useful and informative and on a personal level I would like to thank all colleagues I have worked with over the last few years in developing, evolving and growing the role of the panel, and our work.

Jane Scattergood

Community Scrutiny Panel Chair

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner,
David Allen



2024 has been a year of change not only for my office but for the Community Scrutiny Panel. From 1 April 2023 we took on Fire Governance and the Panel are now encompassing this area of business into their annual work programme. I am incredibly grateful for the commitment, professionalism, independent and pragmatic

approach taken by the Community Scrutiny Panel in their work. They provide effective and sensible challenge which enables my office, the police and the fire and rescue service to take stock and indeed to change practice where necessary in order to improve the service we are all here to deliver to the public of Cumbria. The ability of the panel to evolve and undertake in-depth scrutiny of specific areas provides not only myself but also the communities of Cumbria with additional assurance. It seeks to achieve this by acting as a critical friend in the work it oversees.

Whilst we are blessed with highly professional, dedicated and committed police officers, staff, firefighters and fire staff we must always be ready to examine performance to ensure that each organisation maintains the highest possible standards, when often faced with difficult and challenging circumstances. I look forward to working with the Panel in 2025.

David Allen
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria

Chief Constable, Rob Carden



As a Constabulary we strive to provide members of the public with an outstanding police service to keep Cumbria safe. The ongoing transformation of the force has delivered significant improvements in performance and service delivery to communities across Cumbria over the last 12 months. The breadth of these

improvements covers a range of areas including call handling, response to calls, crime data integrity, standards of investigation, outcome rates, proactivity and crime prevention. However, in order to build public confidence in policing, it is imperative that our police officers and staff continue to demonstrate the highest ethical and moral standards.

The important work of the panel provides us with the independent scrutiny to ensure that we demonstrate the highest standards of ethical performance and continue to respect a national model of policing based on the principle of ‘policing by consent’.

Rob Carden
Chief Constable, Cumbria Constabulary

Chief Fire Officer, Paul Hancock



The Vision of Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is to be a community focussed, professional and trusted Fire and Rescue Service that makes Cumbria a safer place for all. Over the last twelve months the Service has gone through a significant change process and moved

from the governance of Cumbria County Council to the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC). This has involved a significant amount of work, that has included the creation of new departments, a large number of policies and procedures to be rewritten and the introduction of new IT systems. Despite this, front-line performance to the people of Cumbria continues to be excellent.

The scrutiny work of the panel provides us and the public with the reassurance that we are delivering within a framework based on the National Fire Chief Councils Core Code of Ethics and enables us to continue to embed within the PFCCs governance structure with confidence.

Paul Hancock
Fire Service Lead, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service

About the Community Scrutiny Panel

During 2024 the Panel changed its name from the Ethics and Integrity Panel to the Community Scrutiny Panel as it was felt that this would more accurately reflect the role and work of the Panel. The Community Scrutiny Panel challenge, encourage, support and promote and influence high standards of professional work and ethics within Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC); ensuring that these are effective in all organisations. This report provides an overview of the work that the Panel has carried out during 2024.

The Panel meets privately on a quarterly basis to enable open and frank discussions. The agenda and reports are published on the Commissioner's website following each meeting, with only sensitive or confidential information being excluded. Notes from the meetings are provided by the Panel to the Commissioner to provide information about the Constabulary, Fire Service and OPFCC's performance in areas that relate to ethics and integrity. The purpose of this is to promote openness, transparency and public confidence.

A programme of work is developed and agreed on an annual basis enabling the Panel to fulfill its terms of reference and scrutiny role. Where necessary the Panel will also provide scrutiny for areas identified during HMICFRS inspections to enable the implementation of recommendations to be monitored. In addition, they have critical and important thematic issues referred to them by both Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. This enabled the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Officers to be provided with independent reassurance.

Further information regarding the Panel, its membership, and the work it carries out can be found on the Commissioner's website:
[Community Scrutiny Panel](#)



**The membership of the
Panel in 2024 was:**

**Jane Scattergood
Andrew Dodd
Eloise Abbott
Penny Walker
Alison Ramsey**

**Alex Rocke
Megan Masters
Shaun Thomson
Ben Phillips**

Work of the Panel During 2024

Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct



The Panel's role is to ensure that both the Constabulary, Fire Service and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner have embedded within their organisations their respective **Code of Ethics** and **Code of Conduct**.

The Panel have been provided with assurance whilst carrying out their role that all organisations take the ethos of the Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct seriously and this has been evident in the reviews and dip samples they have undertaken in other areas of business. During their various dip sample sessions, the Panel saw first-hand that policies and procedures within the Constabulary and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service had the ethos of the Code of Ethics embedded within them.

Similarly, the Commissioner upon election in May 2024 swore an oath to act with integrity and signed a Code of Conduct and Ethics. It sets out how the Commissioner has agreed to abide by the seven standards of conduct recognised as the Nolan Principles. This Ethical Framework allows transparency in all areas of the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner. These principles encompass the Commissioner's work locally and whilst representing Cumbria in regional and national forums.

Equally importantly, all the OPFCC members of staff adhere to a **Staff Code of Conduct** which is based upon the model Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees and incorporates the principles arising from the Nolan Report, providing a framework for all employees in terms of official conduct. During 2024 the Panel did not identify any complaints received from either members of staff or the Commissioner regarding conduct or integrity.

Public Complaints



At their quarterly meetings the Panel received performance data from the Constabulary on the number of complaints received, how these have been managed and whether they were within the required timescales. From these reports there were areas which had again seen an increase in complaints being received, these being 'Police Action following Contact', 'Police Powers (Policies and Procedures) and Use of Force. The Panel undertook to specifically review some of these complaints to see if there were any trends or concerns during their two dip sample session in 2024. During these sessions within the Constabulary's Professional Standards Department (PSD) they reviewed a total of 60 files directly via the Centurion system enable members to view all information, actions and outcomes on the live system. Panel members spoke directly with case workers regarding any issues or concerns.

Quality of Service Issues



The Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner received 789 letters, emails and telephone calls from members of the public who wished to raise issues or dissatisfaction with the Commissioner, highlighting issues that were concerning local communities. Many of these related to operational policing and the OPFCC liaised with the Chief Constable's Staff office to provide information or a solution for the individual. The types of issues raised are varied and detailed below are some of the categories:

- Police Service Dissatisfaction regarding the standard of service provided or received
- Firearms Licensing
- Fox Hunting
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Anti-Social Driving
- Crime – drug dealing, rural crime, knife crime and ongoing 'in progress' issues.
- Welfare concerns

Many of the solutions were provided by the Constabulary in conjunction with local policing teams, local focus hubs and partner agencies, including local educational establishments, to see to identify the underlying causes of crime or behaviours and seek to support and deter individuals from going on to make further adverse life choices. The information gathered is used to look at how assistance or changes can be provided not only locally but throughout Cumbria. The Commissioner also uses the information to implement local initiatives to make a difference to local communities. Some of these included Safety of Women at Night (SWAN), Safer Streets Projects in Whitehaven and Workington, and funding for local projects through the 'Property Fund'.

The Commissioner also has responsibility for Fire governance and the OPFCC received twelve contacts from the public which related to:

- Fire Resources (buildings and fire fighters)
- Fire Consultation
- Miscellaneous/general issues
- Workforce complaints

The OPFCC also received a number of compliments thanking the Commissioner, Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service for all their excellent work.



Complaint Reviews

From 1 February 2020 the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) has carried out **Public Complaint Review** outcomes of when requested by the complainant. During 2024 the OPFCC received 49 review requests, which 11 (22.4%) of those carried out were upheld and recommendations made. The Constabulary had carried out further work providing the complainant and OPFCC with their findings and outcome. Identified learning from the upheld reviews was collated and disseminated within local teams and more widely across the force. The Commissioner is sighted on this information and monitors force progress and learning at his Executive Board meetings with the Chief Constable and other senior officers.



Misconduct - Police Officer & Police Staff

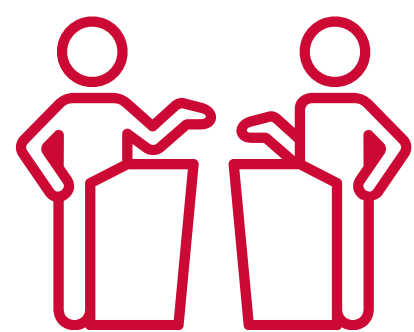
The Panel received information on a quarterly basis relating to **Police Officer** and **Police Staff Misconduct** from the Constabulary's Professional Standards Department. This enables the Panel to monitor performance in relation to these areas of business and consider any patterns or trends across the whole organisation. During 2024 there were 80 conduct allegations made and the outcomes ranged from dismissal, written warnings and reflective practice. As part of their work programme the Panel have reviewed 13 gross misconduct files during two dip sample sessions in 2024. During the session the Panel reviewed all completed files, providing views and recommendations for any improvement in the way information was provided, how cases were handled or the public perception of the handling of such cases. The conduct matters related to the use of Constabulary systems without a policing purpose; discreditable conduct (including sexual harassment and other sexual conduct; unprofessional behaviour (respect and courtesy); honesty and integrity; and assault. During 2025 the Panel will look to review completed accelerated misconduct hearing cases as part of their work programme.

Misconduct - Fire Employees



The Panel carried out a dip sample session of **Fire Employee Misconduct** cases in October, reviewing 10 of the 13 recorded cases which had been dealt with during previous 12 months. The cases had been dealt with a timely and professional manner. The use of an external investigator had produced clear and concise reports, providing consistency for the service. The Panel were particularly pleased to see that following the conclusion of each misconduct case it was internally reviewed to ascertain where improvements could be made in future cases or within the service.

Grievances



On a six-monthly basis the Panel have reviewed **Police Grievances** being processed by the Constabulary. Although the Constabulary's HR Department dealt with all grievances, they link in with the Anti-Corruption Unit to ensure matters were cross referenced. In April and October 2024, the Panel reviewed a total of 9 finalised cases and discussed each one in turn with the HR Manager. Generally, the grievances were regarding policies and procedures or action taken against an individual. For any officer or member of staff leaving the organisation the Panel were keen that detailed conversations were held with individuals to help understand the issues and make improvements to officer and staff employment. The Panel also reviewed three **Fire Workplace Complaints (Grievances)** members found that the outcomes were appropriate. They recommended that further training for managers be provided to enable them to deal with such matters.

Civil Claims



On behalf of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner the Panel also monitor **Civil Claims** being processed by the Constabulary and the Fire and Rescue Service. They received information about the types of claims being made, the stage the proceedings had reached and about the claims that had been resolved. As part of this oversight the Panel seek assurance that any trends are being identified and how the organisation has learnt from particular cases; disseminating such information throughout the organisation to avoid future risks and claims. For the Constabulary 85 claims had been made for a wide variety of issues; whilst the Fire and Rescue Service had 3 live cases being dealt with. Any identified learning was subsequently disseminated across the relevant organisation.

Young in Service Officers



Young in Service Officers continued to be an area which the Panel reviewed across a number of areas of business including complaints, misconduct and officers leaving the organisation. As part of their 2025 work programme the panel would be reviewing sickness absence and exit interviews

Recruitment – Fire Fighters



The Fire and Rescue service continued to carry out '**On-Call**' **Recruitment** throughout the year. Following feedback from the Panel in 2023 the service had changed the process which had received many positive responses. The process was now open all-year round to enable the service to build up a relationship and support potential candidates. Work had been carried out to speed up the different elements to allow candidates to understand whether they had been successful and move to the next element. The diversity of the workforce continued to developed, seeing more females joining and work being carried out to support neurodiverse and dyslexic candidates.

Police Officer & Staff Wellbeing



During 2024 the Panel monitored **Officer and Staff Wellbeing and Sickness**. In November 2024 the total headcount for Police Officers was 1,359; Police Staff 704 and 60 PCSOs. Further recruitment would be carried out during 2025 and the Panel would be monitoring this as part of the 2025 work programme. During the second half of the year officer absence rates had increased from 3.6% at the same point in 2023 to 5.3%; with staff absence falling from 4.4% to 3.6% at the end of September 2024. Officer retention was a cause of concern to the Panel with the number of officers leaving the organisation increasing (7.3% during 2023/24) and a prediction that this would continue to rise during 2025. As part of the 2025 work programme the Panel would be dip sampling Constabulary employee absence and exit interviews.

CFRS Employee Absences



The Fire and Rescue Service had taken the decision to combine the firefighter and staff sickness procedures into one. This would benefit both the organisation and its staff. The new Firewatch System would ensure that there was a clear and consistent policy and approach for all staff, enabling CFRS to obtain data and trends information. A Mental Health App was being developed and would be available for everyone to download and use. The Panel dip sampled 9 cases and identified that on occasions the cases lacked accurate records of discussions and agreed actions which was essential for both the organisation and individual. They recommended that the sickness process would benefit from having a timeline identifying the different stages and options for to assist in managing absence.

Police Custody Detention



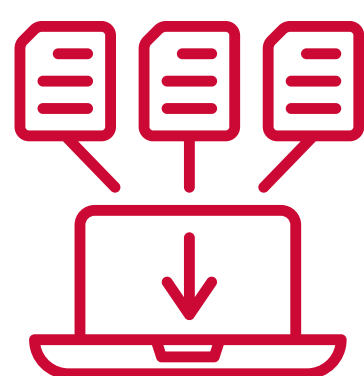
As part of the Government framework to monitor **Custody Detention Scrutiny** the Panel moved from an annual to quarterly performance reports and dip sample sessions where they reviewed 14 cases and provided feedback. They found that cell insertions were controlled and well managed; use of force forms were not completed by all officers; and raised concerns on the average time of detention disparity between white women and Asian women. It was understood that this was due to time taken for interpreters to attend police stations particularly for police interviews.

Stop & Search and Use of Force



During 2024 the Panel undertook quarterly reviews of **Stop and Search and Use of Force**, enabling the implementation of HMICFRS recommendations to be monitored. The Panel carried out reviews of incidents via body worn video and completed forms, reviewing 53 separate incidents, some of which included incidents where the use of **TASER** had also been a factor. The Constabulary were using Stop and Search as a key tool by the proactive policing teams to help prevent and detect crimes. During some of the Stop and Search cases it was noted that young in-service officers were often quick to apply handcuffs leading individuals to become agitated, more resistant and non-cooperative. Although it ensured that officers remained safe, the Panel felt that the use of softer and verbal skills could achieve the same outcome and this was something that the force was developing with officers.

Information Management



During 2024 the Panel received six monthly reports on how the Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Service and Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner were complying with their statutory duties in relation processing and managing data. This included Freedom of Information Requests, Subject Access Requests and data processing. Both the OPFCC and Constabulary continued to see a year-on-year increase in the number of requests being received. The reports also identified whether any data breaches had occurred and how these were dealt with, including whether or not they had been reported to the Information Commissioner's Office and the subsequent outcomes. CFRS also had responsibility to respond to planning applications within 14 days and during the first 6 months they responded to 247 applications with a 94.1% completion rate within the 14-day period.

Violence Against Women and Girls



In May, the Panel was provided with an update on the work being carried out by the Constabulary to deliver an array of services in response to offences such as domestic abuse, sexual crime and patterns of behaviour. Cumbria was sixth nationally for positive outcomes or conviction rates, although there was some disproportion in how crimes were recorded and their outcomes. This had led to a domestic abuse trained sergeant and inspector reviewing each case to ensure everything that could have been done had been, to provide the best possible service.

Race Action Plan



The Police Race Action Plan was initiated in May 2022 and sets out changes across policing to improve outcomes for Black people who work within or interact with policing. The Plan was split into four workstreams and the Panel were briefed on the work being carried out by the Force. Training was being provided and rolled out across the workforce, identifying how to address anti-racism, support staff and report issues to maintain the Code of Ethics. Good work was being carried out in Barrow where a sergeant had been working with black and minority groups, embedding PCSO's into different communities and setting up a desk within a multicultural organisation.



Property Store

In 2022 the Panel had raised concerns about the number of civil claims being received in relation to lost or damaged property which had been held by the police. A review of all property stores had been carried out with a number of new storage and working practices being implemented. A significant step forward of inventory management had been realised with bar coding of all property locations to enable accurate accounting and auditing of property. Work was being carried out to identify different methods the force could use to dispose of digital devices. Cannabis dismantling was being developed to ensure a consistent approach to the dismantling and seizure of items from cannabis cultivations. The Panel would continue to monitor this work through reports and any reduction in civil claims being made.



Right Care, Right Person

From May 2024, the Constabulary launched a new approach when dealing with vulnerable people who had health or social care needs to ensure that the right person with the right skills, training and expertise met their needs; and where the force did not have a legal responsibility to deal with the matter. This approach included signposting callers to contact the appropriate agency especially if the responsibility for a duty of care lay with another organisation. Collaborative work with partner organisations had been developed with testing of the designed toolkit taking place at the end of 2023 and early 2024 in preparation for the launch. As part of the 2025 programme the Panel will receive an update on the impact of the implementation.

Thematic Sessions

Since its inception, the Panel has delivered a significant programme of work on a planned, dynamic and responsive basis. Detailed below are some of the areas the Panel reviewed during 2024.



Police Officer/Police Staff Vetting - during 2024 the Panel once again sought assurance from the Constabulary that they were carrying out rigorous vetting of new and existing officers and staff. There had been an increase in the number of vetting cases and a change to the College of Policing APP would place further requirements for dealing with vetting applications. Vetting dip sample sessions took place during February and August 2024, where the Panel reviewed a total of 16 cases. The Panel had found that robust checks had been carried out and where necessary applicants had not been progressed where they did not meet the strict criteria.



From July 2023 legislation had been passed requiring anyone working for CFRS (staff and volunteers) were required to have a **Disclosure Barring Service** (DBS) check as a condition of their appointment. The service had carried out over 600 checks which had identified a total of 29 positive outcomes. The Panel had dip sampled 13 cases and found that appropriate risk assessments and action had been taken where necessary. Their feedback had helped to inform and improve the process for future checks.



Home Safety Visits is an important element of CFRS' fire prevention programme. During 2023/24 they carried out 8,324 visits with a view to preventing accidental dwelling fires or fatalities. Referrals were often made from the NHS, police, social services or other organisations. The Panel dip sampled 18 referrals which represented a cross section of the different referral routes.



The use of **Body Worn Video** continued to feature within the monitoring work of the Panel. In 2023 the Panel had raised concerns and through work of the Constabulary with the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) they had agreed a standardised national approach to pre-vent buffering on all Cumbria BWV recordings. The Panel had also identified that when attending incidents officers were not always activating their BWV when dealing with incidents or members of the public continued to be an issue, or the footage is not marked and retained. Although the situation has improved significantly over recent years. Some complaints could have been dealt with quicker and more effectively if this independent evidence had been available.

Panel Member Recruitment

The Panel Chair, Alan Rankin, retired from the Panel in February 2024 having completed 9 years' service. Following the announcement of his retirement in late 2023 an appoint process was carried out in January 2024. At the conclusion of this process Jane Scattergood was appointed as Chair for a two-year term.

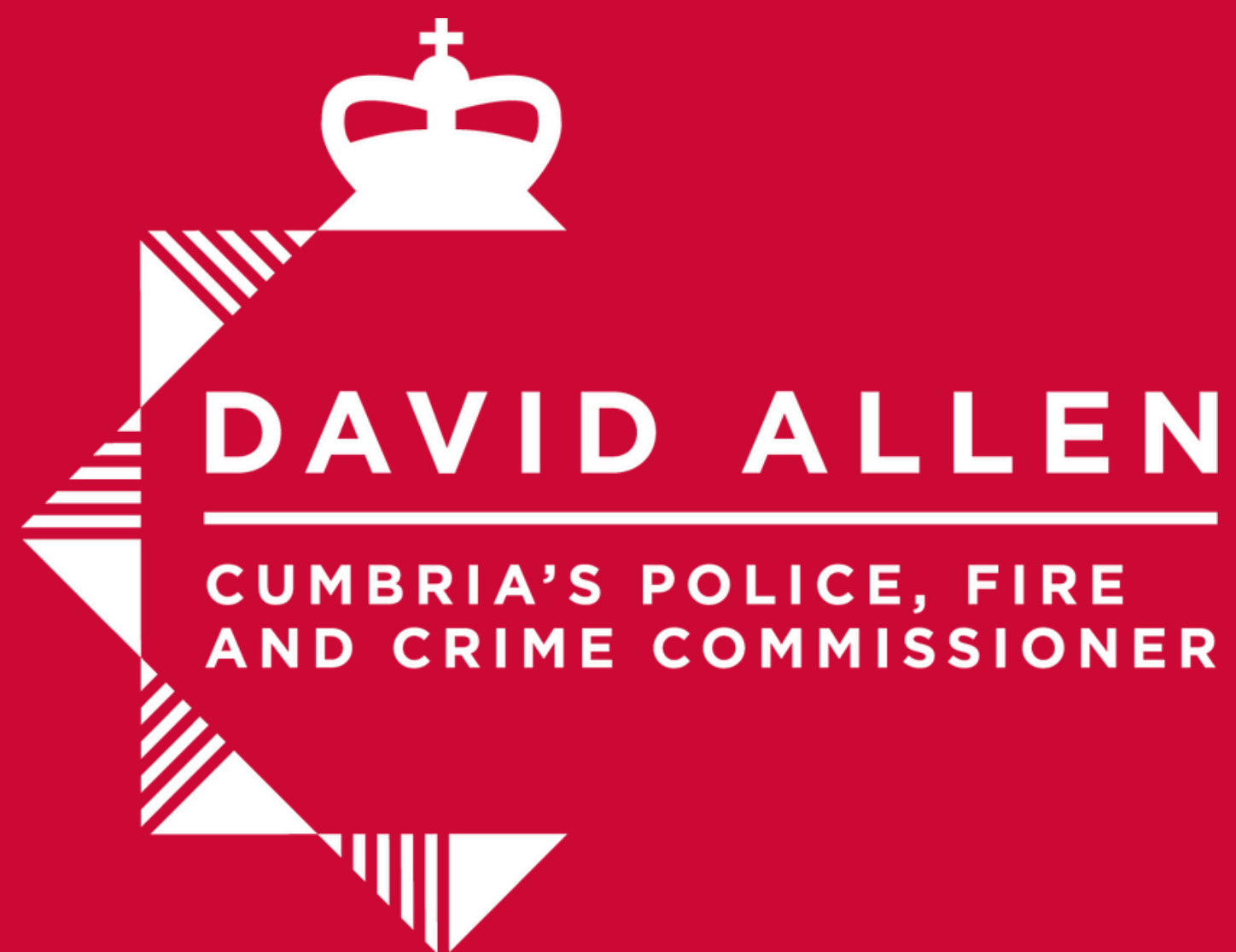
As part of a recruitment process, three additional members were appointed to the Panel. An induction process was held in January and the new members joined the Panel at the February 2024 meeting.



Moving Forward

The Panel continues to develop their role, expanding into other areas of business to assist not only the Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service, but enable the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to have further and more detailed oversight. They have shown their ability to respond to emerging and changing situations; adapt to understand the issues; work with the Constabulary, Fire and OPFCC to carry out work in addition to that scheduled within their work programme; and provide reassurance to these organisations and the public.

Recommendations and guidance given by the Panel continues to be welcomed; resulting in a number of positive changes and developments to processes and procedures. The Panel's 2025 work programme will continue to ensure that the Panel remain an independent body in their oversight of Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.



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