

MINUTES of the meeting of the **SURREY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL** held at 10.30 am on 3 February 2025 at Woodhatch Place, Reigate, Surrey.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Panel at its next meeting.

Members:

(*Present)

District Councillor Richard Smith
Borough Councillor Danielle Newson
*Borough Councillor Richard Wilson
*District Councillor Paul Kennedy
*John Robini (Chairman)
*Borough Councillor Barry J F Cheyne (Vice-Chairman)
Borough Councillor Shanice Goldman
*Borough Councillor James Baker
*Borough Councillor Mike Smith
Borough Councillor Tony Burrell
*Ayesha Azad
*Borough Councillor Steve Greentree
*Samantha Sheriff

1/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Cllr Tony Burrell, Cllr Danielle Newson and Cllr Shanice Goldman.

2/25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 28 NOVEMBER 2024 [Item 2]

The Minutes were **AGREED** as a true and accurate record.

3/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

None were received.

4/25 PUBLIC QUESTIONS [Item 4]

None were received.

5/25 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED INDEPENDENT MEMBER [Item 5]

Mrs Samantha Sheriff was appointed as a Co-opted Independent Member of the Panel.

6/25 SURREY POLICE GROUP FINANCIAL REPORT FOR MONTH 8 OF FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25 [Item 6]

Witnesses:

Lisa Townsend, Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey
Kelvin Menon, Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey (OPCC)

This agenda item was in fact taken after the 'Draft Police and Crime Plan' agenda item at the meeting. The order of the other agenda items remained the same.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chief Finance Officer provided a brief introduction to the report, noting a £0.8 million(m) overall underspend on the revenue budget. There had been overspends in some areas, particularly overtime costs, and a grant received to cover pay rises. Estimated savings of £1.4m above those required were also found in-year which will be used to offset those required for next year. Capital was considerably underspent, with elements of slippage in estates - particularly the new Headquarters (HQ) at Mount Browne. This slippage would be transferred into the new year, he said.
2. A member asked what total transfer into reserves was forecast for 2024/25. The Chief Finance Officer outlined that Surrey Police Group benefited from extra interest on the Group's balances, which was transferred into reserves and would be used to fund capital. He noted that any underspend would also go into reserves.
3. The member asked for a specific figure for this amount. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the amount of interest to date was £1.2m and the underspend was currently £0.8m.
4. The member asked if that was the amount that would be transferred into reserves over this financial year. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed it was but clarified that this amount was not budgeted for. The member asked for the total amount which was budgeted for. The Chief Finance Officer clarified that he would return to members with the exact figure.
5. The member asked if the Chief Finance Office would agree that it would be a substantial sum transferred into reserves this year. The Chief Finance Officer explained that there were transfers into reserves for various things such as insurance reserves, pensions reserves and for capital projects, all of which were considered in the general figures given in the report.
6. The member referred to paragraph 15 on page 22, which mentioned asset sales used to generate funding, and asked what kinds of assets were being sold to raise the £13.2m quoted. The Chief Finance Officer explained that Surrey Police Group is selling several surplus houses, and some of the money from this will be used to fund the refurbishment of the remaining police housing stock. Several surplus police stations and other buildings would also be disposed of, such as Reigate Police Station, he added, clarifying that part of the Leatherhead site was being retained for the new Eastern Hub, and the surplus element of this would also be disposed of. There are several other assets around Surrey being disposed of, such as one asset in Godstone, Banstead Police Station and Horley Police Station.

7. The Vice-Chairman noted that the functions of the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) had been transferred to the Debt Management Office within HM Treasury and the PWLB abolished, though the term 'PWLB borrowing' is still used.
8. A member noted that the additional income raised through mutual aid often helped the finances and referred to the disorder seen across the country in the disorder observed throughout the summer of 2024. He asked if there was an indication as to whether police cells or secondments would be needed this year. The Chief Finance Officer, regarding the operation of police cells, explained that the government had indicated that the use of cells is not currently needed, mainly because of more available space within prisons. Regarding other operations, he explained that there are ongoing discussions with the government regarding how much they would pay towards the costs of the summer 2024 civil disorder. Further income could come from mutual aid during the year but was dependent on need.
9. The member asked if it was possible that there would be no need for borrowing. The Chief Finance Officer stated that he did not expect any borrowing to be required in this financial year. The Mount Browne project is phased with the intention being that this corresponds to the phasing to the capital receipts from asset sales. Some reserves are also held, he said, which are planned to be used towards the cost for the new development, so he hoped that there would not be a need for significant borrowing in the next financial year.

RESOLVED:

The Panel **NOTED** the report.

Actions:

- The Chief Finance Officer to provide the figure of the amount budgeted to be transferred into reserves over this financial year.

7/25 DRAFT POLICE AND CRIME PLAN [Item 7]

Witnesses:

Lisa Townsend, Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey
 Ellie Vesey-Thompson, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey
 Alison Bolton, Chief Executive, (OPCC)
 Damian Markland, Head of Performance and Governance, (OPCC)
 Kelvin Menon, Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer (OPCC)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey (PCC) provided a brief introduction to the report, stating that the Police and Crime Plan 2025-28 constitutes a refocusing of her first Plan and that it broadly sets out her intentions for the next 4 years. She noted that it should not be assumed that the Plan was an exhaustive list of everything that she expects from the Force or the Chief Constable and that it is informed by the public consultation and her experience as the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey.

Consultation

2. A member queried the consultation's methodology and public participation and asked whether the survey's respondents could be said to be statistically representative of Surrey as a whole, noting that over 75% of respondents were aged 50 and over. The member also asked how the PCC sought views from younger residents, as well as those with a range of other characteristics. The PCC explained that the consultation was widely promoted, including through her speaking with affected groups, in addition to online consultation. The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) referred to the first paragraph of the draft plan which references her own and the PCC's feedback and experience from their past four years in their respective roles. The Surrey Youth Crime Commission, now in its third year, provided continuous feedback and was about to publish its second annual report, she stated, also noting that feedback from teachers and school representatives is gathered and factored into the report, many of whom were under 50.
3. A member asked how the results of the public consultation survey had influenced the draft Police and Crime Plan and how this could be evidenced. He also noted that most of five headlines in the plan did not appear in the survey, such as 'Back to Basics Policing'. The Head of Performance and Governance explained that the survey and qualitative data acquired set the foundations for the OPCC to then review the qualitative data from the focus group. This was used to inform the development of specific actions, he said, which then shaped the development of the high-level priorities. The DPCC added that the five categories were used to collate concerns that the public had raised, grouping together issues that arose repeatedly within the survey.
4. A member queried whether road safety had been deprioritised, asked the reason that this appeared to be the case, and how this issue fed into draft the plan. The PCC explained that road safety had not been dropped from the plan and stated that she did a lot of work on road safety. The plan would not include all aspects of work that she would undertake in the next four years, she said, noting that road safety was still part of the plan, though it was not one of the five headlines. The DPCC added that the OPCC and Surrey Police were key partners in the new *Vision Zero* strategy, led by Surrey County Council.
5. A member raised that he is part of Mole Valley's Community Safety Partnership (CSP), which, in preparing its priorities and action plan for next year, has been awaiting the Commissioner's draft plan. He noted that the survey responses are also useful, as the CSP's action plan is directed more at specific categories of crime. Therefore, the member suggested that it would be helpful to have an analysis of how Mole Valley compares with other areas of Surrey to help in identifying specific areas of concern. The Head of Performance and Governance

stated that the OPCC could look at the member's CSP area and whether useful data could be gathered.

Priority 1: Back to Basics Policing

6. The Vice-Chairman raised that under Priority 1, the PCC committed to "*Continue to work with partners to push for improvements in the wider criminal justice system, with a particular focus on enhancing timeliness*". The Vice-Chairman asked if this meant the PCC would broadly support government proposals for reforms or changes to the courts and tribunals systems. The PCC explained that work was being undertaken to deliver any reforms set out by the government to the courts and tribunals system. She outlined that part of her duty was to uphold the law and ensure an effective criminal justice system, particularly as Chair of the Criminal Justice Board. Her role was not to determine national policy, she added, but to help shape its implementation in the county, and that partners across the justice system would continue to be engaged with and advocate for improvements.
7. A member asked about the rationale for the structure of the five new priorities and what relationship the Police and Crime Plan had with the Chief Constable's '*Our Plan*'. The member referred to the roadshows in 2024 where the Chief Constable had made it clear that his plan was largely a response to the PEEL inspection report in December 2023 and asked what relationship there is between these. The PCC replied that there was not a new structure, simply a different five priorities and that the changes are a reflection of feedback from consultation and engagement over the last four years. The Police and Crime Plan did reflect some key elements of '*Our Plan*', she said, with many of them found under Priority 1. The draft Police and Crime Plan is designed to reflect the role of the PCC, which is wider in scope and goes beyond operational policing.
8. The member raised that different people may hold different viewpoints regarding the meaning of the phrase 'Back to Basics' and asked whether the PCC was satisfied that it provided sufficient clarity. The PCC stated that she campaigned on 'back to basics' policing in the 2024 Police and Crime Commissioner elections and was satisfied that the public understood and supported it.
9. A member referred to the Force's Suspicious Activity Portal, mentioned under the 'Back to Basics' heading, and said this had the potential to gather a lot of data on innocent people as well as suspects or perpetrators of crime. The member asked if Surrey Police managed this data appropriately. The PCC noted that the

laws in this area are very strict and expressed confidence that the Police understood these.

Priority 2: Protecting Vulnerable People in Surrey

10. A member raised concerns regarding Priority 2 “*Protecting Vulnerable People in Surrey*”, due to threats to grant funding for many commissioned services as expressed at the panel’s November 2024 session. The member asked how the OPCC and Surrey Police would commit to the plan’s aims despite this. The PCC assured the panel that the OPCC was committed to commissioning services, and that the OPCC had to ensure funding was directed to where it would be most impactful and sought joint commissioning opportunities. Despite financial challenges, collaboration strengthens the ability to deliver sustainable services, and the OPCC has a strong track record of successfully bidding for government funding, she added, noting that this proactive approach would continue, subject to the availability of government funding. The OPCC has a key role in bringing together partners to address systemic challenges, improve service coordination and make better use of resources, she said.
11. A member asked how the items covered in priorities 2, 3 and 4 were decided; for example, he asked why ‘rural communities’ was grouped under ‘vulnerable people’ as opposed to ‘strengthening safe and resilient communities’, and noted that ‘children’ included all children, but girls were also considered again under VAWG, while ethnic minorities, disabled people and LGBTQ+ were not mentioned here. The PCC reiterated that the plan is not intended to include every area of work that the OPCC will undertake during her term and that the plan’s overarching priorities provide flexibility for the four-year term. The Plan’s structure reflects the reality that individuals in the same demographic could have different needs. She expressed confidence that the plan’s framework allows for a broad and responsive approach to emerging needs.

Rural Communities

12. In reference to the plan’s statement that the OPCC will, “*actively monitor government funding opportunities [..]*” relevant to work in rural crime, the Chairman asked whether this constituted a change in the OPCC’s present policy, and if the funding landscape for work in rural crime has recently changed. The PCC explained that government funding priorities have, in recent years, prioritised specific areas - the previous government did this through the *Safer Streets* funding, specifically for projects preventing VAWG. This process remained the same, and many external funding streams were directed towards those initiatives.

She expected to see more money concentrated in urban areas, noting that the government chose to focus the *Safer Streets* fund in more urban places. The future direction of government funding remained uncertain as the spending review remains in progress. She clarified that the OPCC's approach was to ensure the needs of rural communities was at the forefront of considerations when funding opportunities arose, and that a more creative interpretation of eligibility criteria and a proactive approach for making an investment case in rural policing and crime prevention may be required. She referred to the longstanding commitment to support rural policing but noted that a refinement of approach intended to bring improvements to policing and community safety in rural areas. She suggested bringing further information on rural crime and communities, including environmental crime, to a future panel meeting.

13. The DPCC interpreted this as a reaffirmation of commitment to rural communities and stated that she felt cautiously optimistic about the possibility of additional funding opportunities from the government and other sources. In the last 18 months, she added, there has been a focus on collaborative working at regional and national level and added that she is a board member of the National Rural Crime Network.
14. Regarding the implementation and delivery of *Right Care, Right Person* (RCRP) model, the Vice-Chairman asked if this was intended to reduce the time that officers had to spend with vulnerable people, if any savings accrued could be quantified and if this had any impact on the force's manpower or overtime requirement. The PCC explained these were conversations she had nationally as the Mental Health Lead, a role she has just relinquished. During the implementation of RCRP, it was discussed with the government and Humberside Police, the first force to implement the model. She expressed scepticism about the savings as time freed up by RCRP would be quickly reabsorbed by other operational demands. Given the nature of policing and officer workloads, there was no mechanism she would trust to measure the redistribution of time in a financially meaningful way, she said, stating that she felt the premise of the model is justified and noting the improved outcomes for vulnerable people and that it provides officers the ability to focus on core policing duties.
15. The Vice-chairman raised the issue of the shortage of professionals from other services. The PCC noted this was seen across Surrey in mental health and health services, that the Chief Constable initially chaired the RCRP Gold Group to bring together mental health partnership services and facilitate associated discussions, and that this partnership working with services allowed the benefits of RCRP to be noticed quickly. She

also noted the increase in mental health demand in Surrey and nationally and stated that she thinks that Surrey Police have the right approach and want to explore further through the Community Safety Board.

Priority 3: Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls

16. A member referred to priority 3, which focuses on VAWG and considers the potential step of formally recognising the families of perpetrators of sexual crimes as victims, along with other forms of 'hidden victimhood.' The member asked if there was any analysis of the resource implications this would have on Surrey Police and the HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), and if other proposals had been similarly modelled. The PCC explained that this action from Priority 3 primarily relates to commissioned services and would not directly impact Surrey Police or the courts in terms of operational demand. It involved recognising the wider impact of serious crimes on family units and ensuring appropriate support, she added, clarifying that this action suggests a full review of existing services and opportunities to enhance and expand provision had not yet come about, so specific resource implications were yet to be fully assessed. Close work with partners would continue, including exploring the feasibility of any changes and their potential resource implications. She raised that VAWG, particularly female victims of rape, often spent too long in the criminal justice system before getting an outcome, which was explored at every meeting of the Surrey Criminal Justice Board (SCJB) and through close work with the Victims Minister.
17. A member referred to the government's target to reduce VAWG by 50% in a decade and asked what Surrey's target is. The PCC explained that Surrey Police was one of the first Forces to develop a dedicated VAWG policing strategy and had adopted the NPCC VAWG delivery framework, which focuses on: preparing policing to effectively respond to and reduce VAWG; protecting individuals and communities from VAWG; relentlessly pursuing perpetrators of VAWG; and preventing committal of VAWG. The Police and Crime Plan emphasised tackling VAWG through commissioned services, she added. Reducing VAWG required collective effort from the police, councils, partner agencies and the wider community. The Commissioner stated that, as a result, a numerical reduction target was not set, with a focus instead on implementing meaningful action that drove real change rather than pursuing a figure that she felt the OPCC and the Force can only slightly influence. She also noted that victims should continue to be encouraged to report.
18. The member queried why Surrey does not have a numerical target if the government did, and how success of the plan could

be judged without one. The PCC expressed scepticism of government's targets, and stated she wanted to see the police dealing better with victims and more women feeling that they could report, which was how she would judge its success.

19. A member noted a reference from the papers to “*rebuild[ing]*” trust with VAWG partner organisations under listed Priority 3 and asked about the suggestion that trust and effectiveness had therefore declined. The PCC stated that she did not think that it had declined but noted that Surrey Police was continuously reviewing its governance structures to ensure effectiveness, which sometimes led to the establishment and dissolution of a range of internal boards and working groups over time. Local service providers had been actively involved in these governance structures, but this has recently reduced due to different priorities and a desire to ensure the greatest efficiency. The adjustment of structures was not about distancing from partners, she added, but rather part of an evolving approach to governance and finding the best approach. She also referred to stakeholder engagement sessions’ feedback with local service providers, which have demonstrated a need to refine closer working once again. She was not intending to dictate to the Chief Constable how to achieve this, nor suggesting that emulating the previous model was the ideal or only solution. She stated that the experience of frontline workers in supporting victims of VAWG had to be acknowledged and their voices heard by the leadership of Surrey Police.

20. The Head of Performance and Governance added that relationships with VAWG organisations across commissioned services remain good and felt that these are actually better than in other areas of the country. He also referred to the opportunity for the OPCC to consider how to bring their voices into the wider work of the force.

Priority 4: Strengthening Safe and Resilient Communities

21. The Chairman asked how the PCC’s aims under Priority 4 (*‘Strengthening Safe and Resilient Communities’*) would be measured and audited over the plan’s lifetime. The PCC explained that different priorities and actions would be assessed via different metrics and that the Data Hub would be updated with the new priorities and a basket of measures for each. Metrics would be designed to provide a balanced view of performance, combining quantitative data such as crime reduction figures and engagement numbers with qualitative insights. She expected to bring the measures to the Panel once finalised.

22. A member raised a concern regarding the relatively low number of PCSOs in rural areas, noting that the reason may be that reported crime levels were generally higher in urban areas. The member asked if rural areas could expect to see a fair share of resources allocated for the actions under Priority 4. The PCC confirmed that urban areas do report more crime than rural areas and the 'fair share' would suggest putting greater numbers of officers where there was more crime, though she clarified that the distribution of officers remains an operational matter for the Chief Constable. A senior officer in the Force was recently appointed to lead on neighbourhood policing, specifically rural crime and therefore she expected numbers to be part of that review. She also noted that Surrey Police was close to the establishment figure for PCSOs and that there were more than planned for the last cohort of PCSO training.
23. A member asked whether counterterrorism is one of the PCC's priorities, noting that it is mentioned in the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) but not in the plan. The PCC explained that her wider statutory responsibilities included ensuring oversight and local implementation of the SPR. The plan includes a section on the SPR and reaffirmed commitment to support national policing priorities - counterterrorism was a key aspect of this responsibility, despite not being explicitly listed in the plan's core priorities. She also noted that it is not raised regularly by residents, but this does not change her wider statutory responsibilities.

Priority 5: Fostering Integrity, Accountability, and Wellbeing in Policing

24. The Vice-Chairman asked how the OPCC would make certain that adequate resources and support was in place to ensure that the Surrey Police Professional Standards Departments (PSD) and Joint Vetting Unit (JVU) were effective and well-led. The PCC explained this was a broad area and she one that she discusses frequently with the Chief Constable and at regular meetings with the Surrey Police Federation. Work was carried out with Surrey Police's PSD on statutory reviews of complaints, timeliness assessments and dip-sampling of cases to identify themes and track issues, she said. She noted that the individual leading this area within the OPCC is regarded as one of the best in this field in the country and suggested that the panel heard directly from them at a future meeting. She stated that one of her key duties was to facilitate gross misconduct hearings and police appeal tribunals, and OPCC staff worked to recruit, train and oversee the appointment of legally qualified advisors and independent panel members. Outcomes are monitored to understand specific trends and proactively address any issues faced by Surrey Police, she clarified. She offered to update the

panel on misconduct and oversight processes at a future meeting.

25. A member asked how partnership working with other forces has fed into the plan, what the PCC thought its effects were on the SPR and what accountability mechanisms were in place to ensure understanding and ownership of issues at a high level. The PCC explained that compliance to SPR was a statutory requirement of police forces and PCCs, and that consideration of the SPR and the Force's delivery was a standing item on the Resources and Efficiency Work Programme, with the next update in March 2025. Regular meetings were held with other South-East forces, she added, who were also collaborated with on regional organised crime units and counterterrorism. These include Thames Valley, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Sussex and part of Kent.
26. A member asked how compatible the Sussex and Surrey Police and Crime Plans were, noting it could be easier to report against a common framework when collaborating. The PCC stated this was a matter for the Sussex's Police and Crime Commissioner, whose priorities were distinct from her own.
27. A member asked how the public and the panel would be able to monitor the OPCC and Surrey Police's progress towards stated aims if monitoring information would be focussed on activity or on outcomes, and if the Data Hub would be updated to include targets for specific metrics to help inform whether the plan was successful. The PCC expressed confidence in the public's ability to use the Data Hub to assess whether Surrey Police was doing well towards its aims. The Data Hub would be updated with new priorities and measures for each to help users understand delivery, she added. She also noted that some measures would track outcomes, such as burglary attendance rates or solved outcomes for VAWG related offences, though other measures would track activity, being the delivery of specific events, and that the final metrics would be shared with the panel.
28. The Head of Performance and Governance added that data from the Office for National Statistics was taken at the end of each financial year to provide an average for various crime types and volumes, which was inputted onto the Data Hub as a note to provide greater context.
29. A member stated that they felt it would be more helpful if there were objective targets. The member noted that the Thames Valley Police and Crime Plan had 17 objective measures that would be used to determine whether the plan had been successful. The PCC stated she would not comment on the Thames Valley Commissioner's plan and expressed that she

had no doubt in the panel's ability to support and scrutinise her plan and work.

30. The Chairman requested that the plan was received earlier in future years. The PCC referenced the importance of getting the plan right.

The Panel **RESOLVED:**

31. The panel welcome the Commissioner's renewed Police and Crime Plan 2025-28 and its focus on areas important to the residents of Surrey, such as *Protecting Vulnerable People in Surrey* and *Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls*, among others.
32. The panel expressed interest about the impact of the public consultation process on the draft Police and Crime Plan and concern about how this can be evidenced, as well as the statistical representativeness of all Surrey residents given the number of respondents and demographic distribution.
33. The panel notes the commissioned work underway to combat violence against women and girls (VAWG), expresses its concern about the threatened funding environment for commissioning work in this area and supports the protection of funding for work to prevent and combat violence against women and girls.
34. The panel continues to be concerned about the tracking of publicly available data from the OPCC's Data Hub given the absence of clear, fixed targets for each metric and priority listed in the Police and Crime Plan.

Actions:

- Head of Performance and Governance to assist in finding survey response data, specifically relating to the Mole Valley Community Safety Partnership.
- Scrutiny Officer to pursue adding an update regarding the OPCC's misconduct and oversight processes to the Panel's Forward Work Programme.
- The Chief Finance Officer to provide the figure of the amount budgeted to be transferred into reserves over this financial year.

8/25 PROPOSED SURREY POLICE PRECEPT 2025/26 [Item 8]

Witnesses:

Lisa Townsend, Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey
Ellie Vesey-Thompson, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

Alison Bolton, Chief Executive, Officer of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
 Damian Markland, Head of Performance and Governance, OPCC
 Kelvin Menon, Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer, OPCC

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The PCC introduced the proposed precept. She stated that the precept consultation closed with 3,240 votes with a 59% to 41% percentage split in favour of the precept. Ten days prior, 2400 people had voted, with the percentage split the same at that point. She expressed disappointment at level of government funding and the fact that the recent grant increase covers only the pay rise from the previous year and so posed challenges. Furthermore, she noted that almost all PCCs were intending to raise their precept on local council tax by the maximum amount of £14, as expected by government, so Surrey was not an outlier.

Opening

2. A member asked how Surrey residents could be assured that the proposed precept increase and associated budget and capital spend was required to maintain financial stability, especially considering the context of financial hardship for residents and high national inflation. The member noted that the maximum amount proposed was somewhat ahead of current inflation, and the possibility of increases in transfers to reserves in the current year. The PCC explained that the precept increase contributed to current and future financial sustainability, and that the increase was required to ensure that the improvements set out in the Chief Constable's plan could be delivered. The government grant increase was only enough to fund the pay increase for 2024/25, and it was assumed by them that council tax would fill the gap. She also added that an element of the precept would be needed to fund victim services.
3. The Chief Finance Officer added that the increase was above inflation, but that the impact of considerable historic inflation also has to be managed in that years of high inflation precept increases were below that rate. In the medium-term financial forecast projections, he explained that significant savings need to be achieved over the next 4 years and the precept increase was therefore needed to maintain the present level of services, drive improvements, and deliver financial sustainability throughout the medium term.

Funding

4. A member asked about the basis was for the claim that government had *"[.] decided not to prioritise funding to reduce*

crime or support victims”, as mentioned in paragraph 9. The PCC explained that between the 2025 and 2026 funding allocations from the Ministry of Justice, there was a reduction of 4.2% in the grants provided for these services, despite rising demand among victims and increasing delivery costs. She added that Home Office funding for preventing VAWG was not renewed for 2025/26.

5. A member noted that the panel received a set of clarifications from the Panel’s Finance Sub-committee, including a clarification regarding the statement in paragraph 11 that the inflation rate in the November 2024 Consumer Price Index (CPI) was in fact not 3.5% but 2.6%, falling to 2.5% in December. The member raised that if the precept was increased by 4.3% with the council tax base also increasing, this would equate to a total increase of 5.2% in the council tax received by the Force. The member therefore asked whether the PCC agreed that this was more than double the rate of inflation. The Chief Finance Officer stated that he would like to be able to align the precept with inflation, but that is not always possible, particularly in years of high inflation. The council tax increase is determined by a range of factors, such as an increase in the number of residents and an increased policing demand, he explained. A Band D Surrey resident would still only see a £14 increase, irrespective of the change in the tax base, which was driven by population, he stated. The actual rates of CPI in November and December 2024 were clarified after the meeting. The PCC also stated that the precept proposal equated to 4.3%, which was not double 2.6%, and not 3.5%, and reiterated the additional strain on services.
6. The member noted that inflation has outpaced wage growth in recent years, which would affect residents, and therefore if they were asked to pay an above inflation increase on their council tax next year their standard of living would drop further, referring to the fact that many residents struggled to afford their bills and support their families. The Chief Finance Office stated that he felt this related more to government policy and increasing poverty due to wider social factors, which could not be addressed with the £14 precept alone.
7. A member asked how the PCC would respond to counterargument asking why Surrey Police required extra funding if it was performing so well, especially compared to the previous year when the critical PEEL report arguably justified extra expenditure to address concerns raised. The PCC replied that the Force was doing well compared to 18 months prior, but there are still many improvements required to continue the delivery of a better service and the 2024 PEEL report was a reflection on the previous Chief Constable’s plans and work - the

current Chief Constable has since made good progress, she added. Her proposed precept was required to cover additional costs that the Force had little or no control over, she added, which amount to £23.2m as set out in paragraph 56 of the report, relating to things such as pay and inflation. She also stated that the government has assumed those costs would be covered by the precept by including this in their Police funding tables. However, if the precept was not raised, these costs would need to be funded by further savings, placing those improvements already achieved at risk. The precept increase was needed to maintain the Force's current position.

8. Regarding performance and paragraph 26 of the report, the member suggested displaying the number of cases reported alongside figures for the increase in the charge rate. The Head of Performance and Governance explained that most of the crime volumes are available on the Data Hub which is accessible to members and the general public.
9. The Chairman raised that paragraph 45 in the report stated that Surrey Police was set to receive £1.3m of funding for extra neighbourhood policing in 2025/26, asking where this extra funding had been allocated and how it would translate into more neighbourhood policing. The PCC explained that she had received a recent communication from the Home Office that the amount provided for the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee would be increased from £1.3m to £2.6m. The government were yet to inform the Commissioner what this money should be used for and how it's spending would be monitored, though this is expected soon. The Chairman asked that, when an answer from government was received, it was shared with the panel.

Police numbers

10. A member noted that Surrey Police was well-funded compared to other police forces relative to the size of the Surrey population, and that Surrey residents pay a high rate towards policing through their council tax. The member also noted that Surrey is a safe county, which they stated may suggest that it requires lower funding than the average, relative to the population. The member stated that Surrey Police had the 9th lowest number of police officers per capita in the country and noted that the panel had heard about the budget underspend as well as unbudgeted transfers into reserves. The member asked if all of the above could be confirmed by the OPCC, and an explanation provided for why Surrey Police therefore requires the maximum precept when it already appears to be well-funded. The PCC rejected the assertion that Surrey Police is well-funded, stating that most of Surrey's police officers could not afford to live in Surrey, and Surrey Police faces the same

pressures as Forces elsewhere but is also an expensive county. Surrey was a comparatively safe county but is seeing increasing demand and complexity of crime, she added, before noting that the allocation of officer numbers under the uplift was not linked to demand but instead linked to the funding formula methodology that she characterised as outdated. She further stated that she feels the funding mechanism is inappropriate and disadvantages Surrey, having amongst the lowest level of government funding per capita in England, meaning that residents must provide 54% of the Force's funding, which did not bring the Force up to the resourcing level of some neighbouring police forces. This level of funding, paid through council tax, is to an extent a legacy of higher rises implemented under the Surrey Police Authority, she stated.

11. The member asked if Surrey Police's overall funding, relative to population size, was above average for forces in England. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the total funding is around average, but the costs of providing policing in Surrey are above average. The decision taken in previous years to increase the precept has kept Surrey Police at around the average rate, resulting in residents paying more for policing compared to other areas, though this is a consequence of the low level of government funding. Regarding reserves, the underspend would be used to fund capital expenditure with reserves and asset sales being used to reduce the amount of borrowing needed for Mount Browne. He clarified that reserves would not be used to supplement ongoing revenue expenditure as they could only be spent once.

Budget and Finances

12. In reference to Appendix A to the report, a member asked what has and would change. The member noted that the PCC had referred to the PEEL report which she said was primarily a reflection on the previous Chief Constable and the current Chief Constable was responding to this and had made changes. The member asked what was now done differently. The PCC explained there had only been minor changes in the budget allocation, primarily reflecting increases in pay and other costs. Regarding changes made by the Chief Constable, she noted that policing was also about culture, attitude and prioritisation, which she had seen change positively in the last 18 months. She stated that the Chief Constable has chosen to prioritise 'Back to Basics' policing, an objective in his plan being to pursue criminals relentlessly.
13. Regarding 'Back to Basics' policing, the member also asked if there were any areas where the PCC expected Surrey Police to be doing less. The PCC explained that she felt this question

concerned operational demand, which related to the remit of the Chief Constable, and noted that the Chief Constable was focussing on need and responding only to demand. Surrey Police is charging offenders more frequently to act as a deterrent and the Chief Constable's 'Our Plan' provided the force with clarity and consistency of direction.

14. The member asked why the £3.6m proposed savings for next year - £1.4m of which is already identified - is not more ambitious, noting the following year's required savings of £6.9m. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the intention was to deliver a higher level of savings than budgeted for 2025/26 given the large savings requirement in the following year, and that there are several transformation projects intended to deliver this. One of these is a complete review of the total operating model. The Chief Constable has a team working on this area, and it is expected to deliver significant savings and operational benefits. The level of savings required past 2025/26 was dependent on certain assumptions, he stated, noting that £6.8m for 2026/27 was calculated based on such assumptions, one being that government funding would not increase.
15. In reference to paragraph 102 in the report, a member noted that around £120m would be spent on the capital programme in the first three years, mostly on estates. In the context of the upcoming Local Government Reform (LGR), with the potential installation of a directly elected mayor in the next few years and possible combinations with other forces, the member asked if that spending was wise, referring to decisions made regarding the Leatherhead headquarters and £3m spent there. The PCC replied by stating that that she does not consider the £3m for the Leatherhead site to have been wasted - half was spent on capturing the brief describing what Surrey Police requires in its HQ, which was transferable to the Mount Browne project. Furthermore, the decision to buy the Leatherhead site was taken by her predecessors, and once she had reviewed it she could not continue backing a plan that was not operationally wanted nor delivered the best value for money. The PCC said that discussions were taking place with Mole Valley District Council regarding the future use and planning for the Leatherhead site, including an eastern Policing Hub. Once completed, it is estimated that Mount Browne would save in operating costs £4m annually of public money, although initially this would be needed to repay borrowing. She also stated that she felt PCCs are not being abolished under LGR, but rather the powers will simply be absorbed under the mayor.
16. The Chief Finance Officer noted that devolution has created a lot of uncertainty. The estate strategy is being reviewed to determine where facilities should be located, and that, to his

knowledge, the merging of police forces was not proposed as part of any plans under LGR. The Mount Browne redevelopment is phased, meaning that it can be slowed down or sped up as it progressed, he stated, and would still have a lot of facilities and resources needed for policing, which would still be required, whether the Force underwent any changes as part of devolution plans or not. He stated now was therefore the right time to go ahead with the redevelopment.

17. A member referred to the “[..] *pressure on other partners’ budgets, such as local authorities*” as mentioned in paragraph 91. The member asked what the nature of the discussions with local councils had been, and if the OPCC was expecting to fill any gaps in funding. The PCC explained that several organisations that worked with the OPCC rely on funding from local authority partners, as well as the OPCC. Concerns were raised around the sustainability of the LA (local authority) funding, so the OPCC remains in discussions with partners to try to help with some funding pressures, such as contributions to domestic abuse services. She stated that the OPCC did not have the resources to address all of the potential LA funding gaps but would direct funds where it was most effective.
18. The member asked to what extent the PCC had been constrained by the referendum limit this year, or whether it had been viewed as more of a target. The member also referred to the £1.3m Surrey Police would receive for neighbourhood policing. Regarding the £1.3m, the PCC explained the conditions of this are not yet known, but it was expected to be for moving, reallocating or hiring extra officers. She expected that the increase for local neighbourhood funding from the government would not cover everything that needs to be done in Surrey. She stated that she did not see the £14 precept as either a target or a limitation, it was what the government expected PCCs to raise council tax by to get the full funding specified for their Force.
19. The member raised that they felt that the precept survey seemed to include more leading questions than previous years, noting that people were given more choice of different possible precept increases last year. The member asked if this was felt to influence the responses. The PCC stated she thought it was straightforward. The OPCC was conscious there had been a PCC election, a general election, and a survey on the Police and Crime Plan all in one year, so had she wanted to make the precept survey as simple as possible for Surrey residents.
20. The Vice-chairman stated his understanding that government grants were set on the basis that policing authorities would raise the precept by the maximum of £14. Regarding devolution, the

Vice-chairman stated that he felt the police must carry on as if it were a normal year, with which the PCC agreed.

The Chairman noted the recommendation in the report – ‘*That the Surrey Police and Crime Panel endorse my proposal to increase the 2025/26 Band D Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Precept by £14, being a 4.3% increase, to £337.57.*’ A recorded vote on this recommendation was requested and supported. The results were as follows:

Cllr Ayesha Azad - in favour
 Cllr James Baker - in favour
 Cllr Barry Cheyne - in favour
 Cllr Steve Greentree - against
 Cllr Paul Kennedy - against
 Cllr John Robini - against
 Cllr Mike Smith - abstain
 Cllr Richard Wilson - against
 Samantha Sheriff - in favour

A majority of the panel voted against the recommendation upon the usage of the Chairman’s casting vote. In accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Panel has the power to veto the precept.

*The meeting adjourned for a short private deliberation at 12.39pm
 The meeting resumed at 12.57pm*

The Chairman outlined that the precept was not endorsed by the panel but was not vetoed.

The Panel **RESOLVED** that the Surrey Police and Crime Panel records:

1. That a majority of the Surrey Police and Crime Panel in attendance did not approve the PCC’s proposal to increase the Band D Property Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Precept by £14 to £337.57, on the use of the Chairman’s casting vote.
2. That the requirement for a veto to be agreed by two-thirds of the full panel membership (which equates to 9 panel members) was not met.
3. That the panel accepted that the PCC’s proposal to increase the Band D Property Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Precept by £14 to £337.57 will come into effect.
4. That the panel would formally report to the Commissioner noting its concerns and reasons for panel members not supporting the proposed precept (by 8 February).

Panel **NOTED** the report.

10/25 COMMISSIONER'S QUESTION TIME [Item 10]

No further comments raised.

11/25 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST MEETING [Item 11]

The Chairman raised that two complaints had been received and considered by the Complaints Sub-committee.

The Panel **NOTED** the report.

12/25 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 12]

The Chairman suggested that members undertook a Forward Work Programming workshop to identify items for scrutiny and consideration throughout the year.

The Panel **NOTED** the report.

13/25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 13]

The Chairman noted the date of the next meeting was the 24 April 2025.

Meeting ended at: 1.06 pm

Chairman

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