

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **SURREY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL** held at 11.30 am on 24 April 2025 at Committee Room, Surrey County Council, Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 8EF.

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
- \* Councillor 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
- \* Councillor Ayesha Azad
- Borough Councillor Steve Greentree
- \* Samantha Sheriff

**14/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]**

The Chairman noted apologies for absence were received from Cllr Tony Burrell, Cllr Danielle Newson, Cllr James Baker and Cllr Steve Greentree. The Chairman noted that Cllr Paul Kennedy had left the Panel, after resigning as a Councillor.

**15/25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 3 FEBRUARY 2025 [Item 2]**

Minutes were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.

**16/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

None received.

**17/25 PUBLIC QUESTIONS [Item 4]**

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman outlined that one public question was received in advance of the meeting from Cllr Jonathan Essex.
2. Cllr Essex asked for confirmation of the timeline for moving the Divisional police HQ from Wray Park in Reigate and whether there would be a public front counter in Redhill and Reigate,

either at the current site whilst operational or after the site had closed. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) explained that Local Government Reorganisation meant Surrey Police was reviewing its estate and looking for an appropriate property for Reigate, with several identified. Reigate and Banstead public would continue to receive high-level policing support, and the Panel would be updated on plans when possible.

3. Cllr Essex stated that the nearest Public Front Counter presence was in Caterham, which was distant, hence the query for one in Reigate and Banstead. The PCC noted that the use of front counters and officers was being reviewed. Very few members of the public attended a front counter, which should be considered for value for money. Currently, plans around the buildings were commercially sensitive.

**Actions:**

- The PCC to provide an update to the Panel and Cllr Essex on the future location of Reigate Police Station, when able.

**18/25 SURREY POLICE GROUP FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE 10 MONTHS ENDED 31 JANUARY 2025 [Item 5]**

**Witnesses:**

Kelvin Menon, Chief Finance Officer

Lisa Townsend, Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

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

Alison Bolton, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer

Damian Markland, Head of Performance and Governance

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. A Member enquired about the most significant changes in the financial position since last month and how these changes could be demonstrated as necessary and proportionate. The Chief Finance Officer explained that there had not been a great deal of change in the revenue budget since last month. Last month, there was a beneficial variance of £0.8mil, and this month it was £0.9mil, indicating a movement of £0.1m. In a budget of £300 million, this change was minimal. The £0.1m change was likely related to payroll forecasting, which represented 80% of total costs. Predictions over the last few months had been consistent.
2. The Vice-Chairman raised that wages and salaries were forecast to be overspent by £3.4m and asked about the expected impact on the overall budget and service and the mitigations in place to control this overspend. The Chief Finance Officer explained that £1.4m of the overspend was due to the pay rise agreed after the budget was set, funded by a Home Office special grant. The

remaining £2m of the overspend was due to overtime, which was an issue for the Force. An overtime review group was looking at where overtime was incurred to try to reduce the cost. The overspend was a potential financial strain and was partly driven by staff vacancies and operational demand.

3. The Vice-Chairman asked if the grant from the government would be shown as a separate item to mitigate the £3.4m and if the £2m overspend in overtime was not forecasted earlier in the year. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the 2025/26 pay budget would reflect the grant and pay funded by the Home Office, which was not included in the original 2024/25 budget because it was announced later in the year. The pay review body was due to report back for 2025/26 shortly, which could again result in an overspend on that budget maybe, offset with a grant.
4. A Member raised that it would be useful to see a further breakdown of the underspends and overspends and to have acronyms explained in future. The Chief Finance Officer acknowledged the difficulties around acronyms and would provide further breakdown in future reports.
5. The Chairman asked for the reasons for transferring £0.7m to a reserve for the purchase of short-life assets, what the assets were, and why this decision was made. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the £0.7m was interest received on balances over budget. Balances were being built up for projects, such as the new headquarters, resulting in more interest being received than budgeted. The excess interest was used to fund short-life assets instead of internal borrowing. Short-life assets included things with a lifespan of less than five years, such as vehicles and IT equipment.
6. The Member raised that reserves at the end of March 2024 were £37.2m, which meant reserves increased by about £15.5m in the previous financial year, equating to about 8/9% of all Council Tax received in the last financial year. The Member asked if those figures were correct, noting that the Police and Crime Commissioner's portion of Council Tax was increasing this year by 4.3%. The Chief Finance Officer explained he would need to check the figures but stated that the level of reserves in relation to their budget was proportionate given the budget was £300m. Reserves were being built up to reduce the borrowing required for the new headquarters and also for contingencies. The Chief Finance Officer mentioned that compared to other public bodies, Surrey Police Group's ratio of reserves to budget was relatively small.

7. The Chairman asked why the mix of ranks at Surrey Police had more senior ranked officers than budgeted for and what the reasons were that the 1% vacancy margin had not been achieved. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the 1% vacancy margin for officers equated to 22 officers, and that it had been missed by only one officer. Balancing the number of officers within the 1% margin was a challenge due to difficulties in predicting the number of people leaving and joining, and Surrey Police did well to be so near to the target. He noted that there was an overrepresentation of sergeants and Chief Inspectors, possibly related to acting up on projects or operations. He agreed to return with an answer if the workforce report did not cover this.
8. A Member asked for clarification around officer number targets. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the uplift figure was 2253, which had to be met. The number budgeted for was 2289. Sometimes, people used the budgeted figure and the uplift figure interchangeably. The additional uplift grant offered by the Home Office was not contingent on those extra officers being maintained, whereas if the 2253 uplift figure was not met, the grant could be clawed back. The Member asked why the target was in headcount rather FTEs. The Chief Finance Officer explained that he did not know why. It was the Home Office that set the rules, and the Force had to comply with them.
9. A Member referred to paragraph 10 in the report which stated £1.4m in savings was found and asked whether they one-off or repeatable each year. The Chief Finance Officer explained that several budget areas were closely looked at by the finance team, such as estates, the finance division, IT, and local policing. There was a new contract for telephony and internet that yielded around £300,000 of savings. Within the £1.4m, an increase in firearms licence charges was assumed to raise £300,000 of income, although some of this income would have to be used to improve the firearms licencing service. The PCC added that they had £18m savings to find over the next four years. The Force had already made £18m in the last ten years. There was a programme constantly looking for savings. The Chief Constable had instructed officers and managers across the force to find savings where possible.
10. The Vice-Chairman asked how officers seconded to other areas and forces were accounted for within Surrey Police's headcount figures, how their salaries and expenses were paid, and if secondment was having any significant effect on Surrey Police Group's (SPG) finances. The Chief Finance Office explained that officers seconded to regional bodies like SEROCU were managed by Thames Valley Police. These officers remained in Surrey Police's headcount but were paid by Thames Valley

Police. This arrangement was a financial benefit for Surrey Police, dependent on whether they were giving more officers away than their proportion of the recharge. For mutual aid requests from the Metropolitan Police (MET), officers would remain at Surrey Police, but Surrey Police could bill the MET Police at the nationally approved rate for mutual aid, providing some financial benefits.

11. The Vice-Chairman asked if the Surrey Police officer headcount would remain the same and requested the financial details regarding secondments. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the numbers regarding secondments were quite small. For mutual aid, it depended on how many times Surrey Police was asked to assist. In proportion to Surrey Police's overall policing budget, mutual aid was not a major amount. He agreed to provide a figure for last year.
12. A Member asked about the current state of police staff attrition, if it was expensive and a problem. The Chief Finance Officer agreed to provide the attrition rate for police staff. Surrey Police still had challenges in recruitment, with a higher attrition rate for police staff than for police officers. Surrey Police could not compete with the private sector, particularly in technical roles such as IT, affecting attrition and ability to recruit, resulting in a vacancy rate of 10.6%.
13. A Member asked what the overtime position was versus 12 months' prior, both costs and overtime reason. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the projection for overtime for staff and officers had fallen by £300,000 between 2024 and 2025, but there was still a large cost. A large part of staff overtime was in areas such as contact where there had been staffing shortages. Officer overtime was incurred in such areas as firearms officers and specialist operations officers. The Member asked if this was something to consider when budgeting next year, to avoid similar trends and overspends. The Chief Finance Officer explained that Surrey Police was looking to reduce the level of overtime expenditure and noted the need to consider the wellbeing of employees doing overtime, which they were trying to address.
14. A Member asked if consideration was given to any options for attracting different types of demographics into police staff roles, such as graduates. The Chief Finance Officer explained that Surrey Police had stands at several different career fairs for school leavers at places like NESOT, Surrey University etc and there was a new marketing campaign for police staff to highlight Surrey Police as a good place to work, with opportunities for career development and sponsored training and qualifications. The PCC added that she and the Deputy PCC spent time talking

to students at GCSE level and above, and to universities. Surrey Police's forensics team also recently held an open day. There was something for everyone in policing, from forensics to the contact centre. This was part of the Force's new marketing campaign. She noted that Surrey's living costs were challenging for young people, who found it was cheaper to live outside Surrey. The Head of Performance and Governance noted the importance of the recruitment pipeline, but also that the Force worked on staff retention, with more focus on finding where there was unhappiness among staff, empowering managers to identify this earlier, and understanding why people wanted to leave.

**Actions:**

- The Chief finance Officer to include more numerical detail/a breakdown on the underspends and overspends, in the next SPG financial report.
- The Chief finance Officer to ensure future reports explained acronyms (such as NDORS, CTSFO, SEROCU & CTPSE).
- The Chief finance Officer to provide information on why the mix of ranks at Surrey Police had more senior ranked officers than budgeted for.
- The Chief finance Officer to provide last year's financial figures for secondments and mutual aid.
- The Chief finance Officer to provide figures for the police staff attrition rate.

**19/25 OVERSIGHT OF THE HANDLING OF POLICE COMPLAINTS, VETTING AND POLICE MISCONDUCT [Item 6]**

**Witnesses:**

Sailesh Limbachia, Complaints, Compliance and Equality & Diversity Lead

Lisa Townsend, Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The PCC introduced the report, highlighting it was an area of importance to policing as it spoke directly to public confidence in the Force. She noted the change that was seen since the Complaints, Compliance and Equality & Diversity Lead (Complaints Lead) joined the team had been felt throughout the Force and Professional Standards Department (PSD). The Complaints Lead had been asked to speak to other police forces and OPCCs due to his work, considered as best in practice.
2. The Chairman asked how regularly the PCC reviewed complaints handled by Surrey Police's PSD and how these review processes helped the PCC maintain oversight of the Force's complaint handling. The PCC explained that the performance of the PSD was monitored monthly through



updates provided to the OPCC. The OPCC had monthly meetings to monitor PSDs trends, performance, and areas of concern. Additionally, the OPCC attended joint quarterly meetings with the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) and PSD to review data in more detail. These meetings provided direct oversight of Surrey Police's complaints handling at both cases of concern and wider systematic levels, allowing for national comparisons. The process ensured transparency, accountability, and a commitment to learn from complaints to improve public service.

3. The Chairman asked what themes had emerged from the regular meetings between the PCC and the PSD, what learning this had facilitated, and what effects this would have. The Complaints Lead explained that the OPCC had unfettered access to the complaint system used by Surrey Police to log and manage all complaints. He noted that there were legislative restrictions on what the OPCC could do. On behalf of the PCC, he dip checked complaints received using the database and on a monthly basis met with the Head of Complaints. An 11.3% increase in complaints compared to the previous year was found. This increase was a national issue, partly due to the now more accessible way to make complaints. He noted seeing an increase in demand including issues with timeliness, which was not good for the complainant. The OPCC had directed the need to speed up that process, and he worked with PSD to try and improve this. With support of the OPCC, a recent improvement plan to speed up complaint management had been introduced by PSD. Another focus was on providing 28-day meaningful updates to complainants, as outlined in IOPC statutory guidance. PSD introduced a support plan and KPIs to improve their complaint handling performance, which would be reviewed in three to six months.
4. The Vice-Chairman inquired about the identifiable effects of the worsening situation regarding recording complaints and contacting complainants on complaint-handling outcomes, the effectiveness of the changes put in place in improving performance so far, and whether there had been changes since the same period last year. The Complaints Lead explained that although there had been a decline, Surrey Police was still better than most similar forces, and the national average in relation to both logging and contacting complaints, and Surrey Police wanted to continue as the leading Force in this regard. Contact with complainants, which used to take 1 to 2 days, now took 4 to 5 days, whereas the national forces averaged at 8 days. Surrey Police recorded complaints within one day, while many national forces took 3 to 5 days. He noted that longer recording times led to longer investigations and longer waits for complainants to receive an outcome.

5. The Vice-Chairman asked if it was possible for the Panel to have more data such as a figure for 'complaints/police officers/day'. The Complaints Lead explained that data captures were set at a national level by the IOPC, and the Home Office set national guidance at a standard that data had to be provided, so there was a limit to the data that could be provided. The OPCC had worked with the Force to encourage the introduction of a PowerBi product to provide more granular information around specific complaints against officers and certain trends. However, it was currently the case that if a named officer had more than three complaints, there was a dedicated review by a supervisor within PSD relating to the Officer and a support plan was put in place to try and reduce and understand the officer's reappearances to the complaints department.
  
6. In reference the paragraphs 2.11 and 2.12 in the report, a Member raised that the reader could interpret reasons for increases in complaints either due to more diligent recording, or due to underlying issues. The Member asked if it was possible to include whether certain themes of complaints were increasing or declining each year and how that compared to other Forces. The Complaints Lead explained that the OPCC reviewed the IOPC data quarterly and scrutinised it with the Force, including the thematic areas. A breakdown of the thematic areas, areas coming to the notice of PSDs and comparisons to other forces was available on the OPCC's website. Surrey Police recorded everything the complainant wanted recorded, which he supported to satisfy the complainant. However, there was an opportunity to reduce the number of complaints recorded, with the IOPC allowing categorisation, which was a piece of work being undertaken by PSD to see if the complaint recording could be improved. The PCC added that all complaints needed to be taken as genuine and it was correct that the process was robust, with everything recorded.
  
7. A Member enquired about the data relied on to inform the conclusion that accessibility led to the 11% increase in complaints and asked what changes had been made to accessibility, and if there was a significant number of complaints being received by a new method. The Complaints Lead explained that it was not just accessibility that would cause an increase in complaints. More people wanted to complain and were aware that they could do so easily. Furthermore, data integrity and the capturing and recording of every complaint had contributed to the increase. The PSD's Administration Team also went through everything meticulously to record a formal complaint if required. A lot of work was done by the OPCC to try to improve accessibility, including a leaflet to anyone contacting the OPCC and signposting people to Surrey Police's PSD to



make a formal complaint if unsatisfied with the service received. The OPCC was the link between the community and Surrey Police for handling complaints. The PCC added that big events, particularly ones with national coverage, led to a spike in complaints. She noted complaints were not exclusive to Surrey residents or witnesses to incidents.

8. The Chairman asked what common reasons or themes emerged from the timeliness reviews where delays to the completion were disproportionate and without reasonable cause and inquired about the learning points generated and their implementation. The Complaints Lead explained that complaints could be delayed when placed in sub judice, with court cases taking precedence over complaint investigations. Most complaints reported to the OPCC were in the court process, so these delays were reasonable. However, scrutiny work by the OPCC also identified delays in complaints due to parallel criminal investigations that had not reached the court stage. Undue delays in the criminal investigation delayed the complaint process. The OPCC's intervention work was to speed up the criminal investigation to enable complaints to be dealt with quicker. Scrutiny also highlighted unexplained delays, such as an independent review of a complaint by the OPCC which recommended an element of the complaint was not effectively dealt with by PSD, which led to a reinvestigation. The Complaint Lead's subsequent timeliness review on that complaint 10 months later found no progress was made. The OPCC intervened in such cases, and anything longer than 12 months was notified to the PCC and the OPCC conducted a review.
9. In reference to paragraph 2.5 in the report, a Member asked what insights had been produced from the analysis of the data from public contact. The Complaints Lead explained that this information was collated on their case work product and could provide more details to the Panel. 28% of contact related to complaints about Surrey Police, 22% related to members of the public wanting to make a report but were making it to the OPCC rather than Surrey Police, 18% were general enquiries, 8% related to review requests, and a lot of contact relating to anti-social behaviour (ASB) etc. The OPCC captured all contact thematically. The Member asked if it drove specific action planning. The Complaints Lead confirmed that it was fed back into Surrey Police to make improvements. The Head of Performance and Governance added that the information was available on the Data Hub.
10. The Member asked how Surrey Police was working to improve its responses to police-perpetrated domestic abuse in light of the super-complaint submitted by the Centre for Women's Justice in 2020 and if the Force had succeeded in improving officers'

behaviour in the last 5 years. The Complaints Lead explained that a lot of work was done on this by the Force, and it was on the PCC's Police and Crime Plan. He noted the relationship between the Force and outreach services providing critical advice and support to victims of domestic abuse. The Force was proactive in identifying officer and staff behaving inappropriately and brought them to misconduct hearings, resulting in an increase in cases being brought forward. Every officer received Domestic Abuse Matters Training and DASH risk assessment training, with regular Continued Professional Development training for officers and staff through the year. The PSD reviewed what was done to identify those officers and if investigators were trained. Work done in PSD included supervisor reviews on any case that involved an officer highlighted for misogyny, violence against women and girls (VAWG), domestic abuse, stalking or harassment. All police-perpetrated domestic abuse cases were reviewed every 28 days by a dedicated supervisor within PSD. The PCC had directed thematic dip-check work, so VAWG themed areas of public complaints were scrutinised to reassure the PCC they were being effectively handled by PSD. The PCC added that most complaints about police officers came from other officers, which was an important and improving part of Surrey's police culture.

11. The Vice-Chairman referred to the Home Secretary's announcement in October 2024 on changes to the police vetting and accountability system, such as strengthening requirements relating to the suspension of officers under investigation for VAWG and a presumption of dismissal for gross misconduct. The Vice-Chairman asked what Surrey Police was doing to ensure its ability to align with these.
12. The Complaints Lead stated that Surrey and Sussex Police's joint vetting department had adopted the new vetting APP, guidance of which was set by the College of Policing, and he had scrutinised the vetting team on it numerous times. Vetting decisions were also scrutinised and dip-checked quarterly. The threshold for approving vetting had improved. For example, working in a team interacting with vulnerable victims required a higher level of vetting. Previously, an officer could transfer between teams without undergoing further vetting. There was now routine vetting before moving teams. Regarding misconduct, he noted there was about a 46% increase in misconduct proceedings because of changes made. Scrutiny applied to this was thorough, tracking every gross misconduct hearing to ensure consistency and outcomes. The OPCC was responsible for appointing independent panel members and legally qualified advisors.

13. A Member asked about the number of misconduct hearings that resulted in warnings, rank reductions, and dismissals, and if any themes emerged from the hearings. The PCC explained that Police Forces published this data, and it could be shared. The Complaints Lead confirmed it was published on the Surrey Police and OPCC website for 28 days after each gross misconduct hearing. The OPCC tracked all the themed areas. There had been more dismissals than ever before because the standard and threshold had changed dramatically due to media coverage of the Angiolini Inquiry, the Baroness Casey Review, and the Sarah Everard case. Surrey Police was now more robust in dealing with breaches to standards of professional behaviour as the public's expected standard. Those officers were brought to a misconduct hearing and either dismissed or given a final written warning. More officers were being dealt with through accelerated hearings, which the Home Office, with changes to the regulations, allowed greater use of.

14. A Member asked what number of the different grades of misconduct hearings had taken place, and what amount had resulted in appeals and were upheld. The OPCC explained that there were two appeals, and neither were upheld.

15. In reference to the table on page 15 of the report, a Member noted that only two allegations were not proven, with other having sanctions applied. The Member asked for reassurance that less serious misconduct, that was still important, was taken to proceedings, as well as serious misconduct. The Complaints Lead explained that there were two different sets of proceedings: a misconduct hearing for cases that would warrant dismissal, and misconduct meeting for breaches of professional behaviour that would not warrant dismissal but still needed to be dealt with. There may be officers going to misconduct meeting that would receive a written warning or other sanction, but not dismissal. The data in the report related to misconduct hearings only.

Members **NOTED** the report.

**Actions:**

- The Complaints Lead to provide some detail on the statistical insight from public contact data. (The Head of Performance & Governance clarified that more detail can be found on the Data Hub).
- The OPCC to provide the link to the data on the number of misconduct hearings that resulted in warnings, rank reductions and dismissals.

**20/25 WORKFORCE PLANNING UPDATE [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 and Monitoring Officer  
 Damian Markland, Head of Performance and Governance  
 Kelvin Menon, Chief Finance Officer

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman asked if any required changes to the workforce were expected to enable implementation of the new Police and Crime Plan 2025-28 and how the workforce requirement for the new Plan was modelled. The Head of Performance and Governance clarified that decisions around the structure and organisational composition of the Force sat with the Chief Constable. The creation of the Police and Crime Plan was synchronised with the existing Force strategy, 'Our Plan', and the OPCC ran a consultation exercise to develop the Police and Crime Plan, which was done in close association with the Force. There was nothing in the Police and Crime Plan that would require drastic changes to the composition of the Force.
2. In reference to paragraph 3.1 in the report on the PCSO attrition rate and projected establishment if maintained at current rate, the Vice-Chairman asked how considerably the vacancy rate of 16% was below target, what effects it was having on services to residents, and what plans were in place to correct this. The Head of Performance and Governance explained that, organisationally, 10% was considered within tolerance. He referred to previous updates given to the Panel on PCSOs which had emphasised the extent the Force was looking at PCSO recruitment and retention. He noted the challenges the Chief Finance Officer outlined with recruitment, particularly to PCSO roles. It was an area of focus for the Force and was monitored through various boards and governance forums and was improving.
3. The Vice-Chairman asked if the shortfall was the result of PCSOs using it as route for promotion to warranted officers. The Head of Performance and Governance noted that during the uplift a few years ago, many PCSOs transitioned to Police Officers, indicating a clear trajectory. Therefore, neighbourhood policing had not drastically suffered in terms of total footfall, despite lower PCSO levels, as many PCSOs became Police Officers in local areas. Historically, many aspiring Police Officers chose to be PCSOs first, but now, due to the need for more Police Officers, this could stage be skipped. This made recruitment of PCSOs harder.

4. The PCC added that many Forces had recruited PCSOs on the basis of 'try it out and see if you like it' to then become a Police Officer. The new recruitment campaign for PCSOs was focussed less on 'do you want to be a Police Officer?' and more on 'do you want to support your community?'. The Head of Performance and Governance added that there was more focus on ensuring new recruits understood the nature of police roles, as high attrition rates among graduate entries and similar pathways were seen previously.
5. A Member asked what learning and actions had been recently produced by the Capacity, Capability and Performance Board (CCPB) and the Strategic Resource Management Meetings (SRMMs). The Head of Performance and Governance referred to the expense of living in Surrey, particularly on a lower salary, noting economic challenges made certain roles less attractive. Shifting public perception of the nobility of policing due to incidents in the last few years deterred some people from applying. Recruitment pathways were being looked at to try to ensure incoming personnel were suitable and ready for the role, and retaining people, which involved giving managers more responsibility to look for unhappiness and people wanting to leave.
6. The Member asked for reassurance that the underlying causes of wellbeing concerns among officers, such as discrimination, bullying, high workloads, and lack of equipment, were being addressed simultaneously to the wellbeing strategy described in point 8.5. The Head of Performance and Governance explained that the OPCC had good oversight of the new wellbeing strategy and would receive an update with the Force at the next Resource Efficiency meeting. One of the concerning issues that came from the last staff survey was officers not having the right equipment. It was found that it was not always because the Force did not have the equipment or could not afford it, but that sometimes people did not know who to ask for the equipment. Actions plans and metrics, considering how managers could be empowered, and improve problem-solving within teams had been implemented following the staff survey.
7. The PCC added that under the old regime with the previous Chief Constable, she saw many posters about wellbeing but little action. This issue was highlighted to the current Chief Constable, who felt strongly about it. The Chief Constable recently implemented a programme of talks, including one with Professor Steve Lockley, a neuroscientist, discussing the importance of sleep and rest. The Chief Constable was looking at a holistic approach, ensuring people knew who to contact for the right equipment and could identify their line managers and empowering line managers.

8. The Deputy PCC added that the most consistent concern she heard related to post-uplift staff change. Many teams were mixed-up to allocate more senior officers into other teams as new officers came in, or teams were full of new officers with more limited experience. This was starting to settle down, but it meant additional pressure in the short term on those more experienced to mentor new officers.
9. The Chairman asked how the recent clarity from the Home Office on the specifics required to deliver the government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee was expected to impact the workforce, if the new requirements would affect other parts of the workforce, and how 'Neighbourhood' was presently defined. The PCC explained that the Home Office had held a call with PCCs the previous week to discuss the specifics required and noted more updates were awaited. She expressed scepticism about named and contactable officers for community issues due to shift patterns or annual leave and stated a preference for people knowing how to contact their local policing force rather than a particular named officer. Guidance was coming out, which the Home Office advised was not mandatory and no extra money would come with it. In the meeting, the Home Office viewed 'hotspots' as town centres, but at the Home Office meeting it had been highlighted that rural or suburban areas' needed more officers. Regarding 'Neighbourhoods' definition, the PCC stated it should be up to the Forces, who would know what their neighbourhood was.
10. The Head of Performance and Governance added that there were a series of meetings set up with the Chief Constable to review what it meant in practice and the operational considerations. Once those meetings took place, the OPCC could report back to the Panel.
11. A Member referred to the government's announcement in March of a funding increase for rural and wildlife crime units and asked if any clarity was received on what funding would be awarded to Surrey or how it would be deployed, and how the Force would work with the National Rural Crime Unit and National Wildlife Crime Units. The Deputy PCC clarified that Surrey Police had not been allocated a specific local share of the funding. Support was being directed at the National Rural Crime Unit and the National Wildlife Crime Unit, and it was under £1m. Both units provided co-ordination, intelligence, and support to all forces across England and Wales, so whilst Surrey Police was not receiving direct funding, it was closely linked to mechanisms such as joint operations, cross-border intelligence and specialist support.



12. The Vice-Chairman asked if private security companies were used by Surrey Police to assist in the enforcement of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and how these contracts were awarded and funded. The Head of Performance and Governance explained that PSPOs were put in place by Councils and the Force would sometimes support enforcement through PCSOs and Officers. If there was any additional security put in place it would be contracted through the Council that had set up the PSPO. He agreed to check this.

**Actions:**

- The Head of Performance and Governance to confirm that the following is correct: Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) are put in place by Councils. The Force will sometimes support enforcement through PCSOs and Officers. If there was any additional security put in place it would be contracted through to Council.

**21/25 VERBAL UPDATE ON ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, SHOPLIFTING AND COMMERCIAL THEFT [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 and Monitoring Officer  
 Damian Markland, Head of Performance and Governance  
 Kelvin Menon, Chief Finance Officer

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The PCC introduced the report. She outlined that earlier this month she joined plain clothed operations in Guildford, Farncombe, and Waverley, working with officers. The week-long operation involved going to local shops, speaking to staff, offering advice and providing assurance. It aimed to prevent offences, support shop work, and show the business community it was being taken seriously. Eight people were arrested for theft, and four were charged. It aligned with the 'back to basics' approach in the Police and Crime Plan, which aimed to ensure Surrey Police was dealing with issues that effected people day-to-day. Strong results on shoplifting were seen, such as six offenders who stole over £130,000 worth of goods across the south east sentenced following a two-year investigation. A targeted initiative in Redhill led to 155 arrests, including for shoplifting, and a prolific offender was caught in Spelthorne. Retail crime remained a big concern. The OPCC recently closed a retail crime survey that had around 200 business community participants and was preparing a report due in Summer 2025. There were 876 more shoplifting offences charged in the

previous 12 months compared to the year prior. The Force would be holding a local media briefing around this and launching a new retail crime strategy in the following week. The PCC joined officers on a targeted hotspot controls initiative, funded by £1m received last year from the Home Office. The funding supported over 900 extra patrols in 15 hotspot locations, resulting in 34 arrests for offences including assault, drug possession, ASB and prevention. Officers engaged with over 2600 people and carried out 43 stops and searches. This highlighted a visible proactive approach. Just under £353,000 had been secured through the Safe Streets Round Five fund, split between Guildford, Redhill, and Walton-Upon-Thames for community safety projects. The Force was conducting an ASB survey and encouraged Panel members to share it.

2. The Vice-Chairman referred to a situation in Cobham that was mis-reported by the press and on social media. The Vice-Chairman stated this was an area that needed to be addressed, and it be ensured that where there was shoplifting and commercial offences, the premises would be visited rather than just a phone call, which happened in Cobham. The PCC stated that this was part of the Force's wider work. Everything was assessed on a threat and harm basis. She noted that it was appropriate for an officer to visit in the Cobham situation but acknowledged that it would not always be appropriate for an officer to visit. The Chief Constable was clear that all reasonable lines of enquiry needed to be pursued, including getting evidence at the earliest opportunity, which would usually mean a visit.
3. A Member referred to the Chief Constable's statement that he would prioritise dealing with shoplifting and asked about its success. The PCC noted that the Force's fourfold increase in charging shoplifting offences partly demonstrated this.
4. The Member asked about the Crime and Policing Bill 2025 going through Parliament, noting that government would repeal Section 176 of the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which downgraded the police response to low value shop theft. The Member asked if the PCC agreed this was promising. The PCC said she would wait to see if the Act would pass and what guidance would accompany it. Regardless of the Act, the Chief Constable and herself were clear that shoplifting had to be taken seriously and dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
5. A Member raised the issue of attacks on swans by people with catapults and dogs not under control and asked if the PCC felt that PSPOs could work to prevent wildlife crime and how effectively the Force communicated with partners such as the RSPCA.

6. The Deputy PCC explained that PSPOs covered a broad range of issues, largely around ASB rather than animal cruelty. There was work across the Force to prevent, disrupt, and prosecute animal cruelty, to the fullest extent possible. The Force often relied on intelligence from neighbours for animal cruelty behind closed doors or reported by witnesses in public. Regarding wildlife crime, the Force collaborated with the Shepperton Swan Sanctuary and was aware of the threat faced by wild birds. She had written to the Home Secretary on behalf of a sanctuary volunteer regarding regulation of catapults due to their use in causing injuries to, and deaths of, wild birds. There was good communication with dog wardens and vets (for treatment and evidence gathering), though she was unsure about the RSPCA specifically.

#### **22/25 VERBAL UPDATE/Q&AS ON POLICE AND CRIME PLAN IMPLEMENTATION [Item 9]**

The Chairman decided not to take this item.

#### **23/25 PCC FORWARD PLAN AND KEY DECISIONS [Item 10]**

The Chairman noted the details of this was in the agenda.

#### **24/25 COMMISSIONER'S QUESTION TIME [Item 11]**

##### **Witnesses:**

Lisa Townsend, Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

##### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

*One Commissioner's question and answer was received in advance of the meeting and was published as an agenda supplement.*

1. Cllr Richard Wilson thanked the PCC for answers to his question regarding the Home Affairs Select Committee Report into last year's summer riots. He stated that the point the committee made was that police forces felt constrained about what they could say publicly as it could affect a subsequent trial. He asked if there was a way that the recommendations to the police on this area of communication could be revised, or if the Home Office could work with the Justice Department to ensure trials were not affected. This would help to maintain public safety and order in the early stages of an event like the summer riots. The PCC expressed reluctance to speak on behalf of those bodies but stated that the rules around that went to the heart of the constitution and the right to a fair trial. She noted the importance of the point, being one that the Force faced generally. She wanted to see a wider discussion around it nationally. She stated

police forces could be more robust in pushing back but understood reluctance to do so to avoid jeopardising a court case.

2. The PCC added, in response to a member's previous question on holding reserves, the Force needed to be prepared for unpredictable major incidents. The Home Office reimbursed Forces after an event, not proactively. As such, it was necessary to hold reserves. The Member asked if they would distinguish between earmarked reserves and general reserves for something like this. The Chief Finance Officer replied that yes it would normally come out of the general reserve.

## **25/25 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST MEETING [Item 12]**

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman noted that two complaints had been received. One would be considered at an upcoming meeting, and the Complaint Sub-Committee agreed with the recommendations of the Chief Executive of the OPCC to disapply the Regulations for the other complaint.
2. The PCC stated that over the last four years there had been 69 complaints to the Panel accusing her of transphobia, and in light of the Supreme Court's ruling on women's rights in the last week, she hoped the Panel would now agree that insisting sex was the relevant consideration under the Equalities legislation and that any attempt to deny or seek to remove someone from their job for saying so was legally incorrect. The Chairman stated that a solicitor would be present at the meeting and that he wanted the complaint to be heard, noting the changing legislation and for transparency.

## **26/25 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 13]**

The Panel **NOTED** the recommendation tracker and forward work programme.

## **27/25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 14]**

The Chairman **NOTED** the date of the next meeting as 19 June 2025.

Meeting ended at: 1.29pm

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**Chairman**