

MINUTES of the meeting of the **SURREY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL** held at 10.30 am on 2 February 2024 at Woodhatch Place, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 8EF.

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

Members:

(*Present)

Cllr Harry Boparai*

Cllr Alex Coley*

Cllr Richard Smith*

Cllr Daniella Newson*

Cllr Richard Wilson*

Cllr Paul Kennedy*

Cllr Victor Lewanski*

Cllr John Robini (Chairman)*

Mr Martin Stilwell (Vice-Chairman) *

Cllr Barry J F Cheyne*

Cllr Ellen Nicholson*

Cllr Nick Prescott*

Cllr Keith Witham*

Ms Juliet Fryer*

1/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

None received.

2/24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 24 NOVEMBER 2023 [Item 2]

Minutes were accepted as a true record.

3/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

None declared.

4/24 PUBLIC QUESTIONS [Item 4]

None received.

5/24 CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS [Item 5]

The Chairman noted the upcoming Police and Crime Commissioner elections and reminded attendees that there should be no political point scoring in the Panel session.

6/24 HMICFRS PEEL INSPECTION INTO SURREY POLICE [Item 6]

Witnesses:

Lisa Townsend, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Ellie Vesey-Thompson, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Damian Markland, Head of Performance and Governance

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Regarding the PEEL inspection finding that '*the force doesn't always identify repeat and vulnerable victims*', a Member asked if the Force could use best-practice from other Forces to establish the right questions to ask when calls were received. The Commissioner explained that on the 22 February 2023, Surrey Police had upgraded to a new command and control system called SmartSTORM. This had brought several benefits, such as identifying repeat callers. In December 2023, the contact question set was changed, to ensure operators were identifying repeat callers. This was being dip-checked by the Quality Control Team to ensure compliance.
2. A Member asked about the new deployment and grading system and whether the Force was revising down its ambition and targets to improve its chance of compliance. The Commissioner explained that once the final model had been agreed, the OPCC would provide further detail. The main change to the model was more gradings to allow for a more nuanced service. Currently, there was a disparity in attendance times between the different grades. Grade 1 deployment required attendance as fast as possible, Grade 2 within 60 minutes, and Grade 3 within 72 hours. The new model would move from four deployment types to six.

Action i: The Commissioner to update the panel on the new deployment and grading system, once complete.

3. A Member noted the concern of HM Inspector Roy Wilsher that call performance for both 999 and 101 answering times had deteriorated despite being highlighted as '*areas for improvement*' (AFIs) in the last inspection report. The Commissioner responded that staffing data for the call contact centre had previously been shared with the panel and the challenges of staff attrition were well noted. The contact centre was now back to over establishment and was in a place of service stabilisation. A recent update on contact centre performance highlighted that at the busiest times, 999 and 101 call performance was now well within the national target. The Commissioner was confident that performance improvements would be sustained.

4. A Member asked about the call abandonment rate for 101 calls in March 2023, which had a 12-minute average waiting time. The Head of Performance and Governance explained that the abandonment rate for December 2023 stood at 17.3%, which was a historic low. They had high call-back success rates, at 99.2%. The Member asked if the messages that encourage people to use alternative digital reporting channels, adding to waiting times. The Head of Performance and Governance explained that the Force would continue to explore how to deal with channel shifting and was aware of the impact it had on wait times and call abandonment rates.
5. Regarding concerns raised around how the Force recorded anti-social behaviour (ASB), a Member asked if the Commissioner was surprised or disappointed by the result that “the force is failing to record most crime and to tackle antisocial behaviour effectively” and what changes the Force was seeking, to ensure ASB would be effectively recorded and tackled. The recently established bi-monthly ASB performance board was addressing concerns around ASB recording and investigating improvements. It would bring accountability and oversight across departments involved in ASB and oversight of tackling issues identified, in quarterly audits, which would drive compliance. The Head of Performance and Governance added that the Force was engaging with West Yorkshire Police Force, who were recording and tackling ASB well. The Force was looking at their mechanisms, processes and borrowing training packages for staff to help improve the recording of ASB.

Action ii: The Commissioner to pass onto the Chief and Borough Commanders that Public Space Protection Orders are something that can be implemented in boroughs and districts if there is a particular problem with ASB.

6. A Member asked about continuing problems with the way Surrey records sexual offences, previously noted in the 2018 inspection as an AFI (*area for improvement*). In terms of processes, the Head of Performance and Governance explained that the Force had since put in place an improved audit function, looking specifically at sexual offences, to ensure they were being recorded correctly. The December 2023 data portrayed a 12.9% error rate, which was a marked improvement from the 66.6% error rate that the PEEL inspection identified. There was a new performance framework being embedded. The OPCC response to the PEEL inspection, due to be published shortly, would include a more detailed explanation of the new processes that the Force was putting in place.
7. A Member asked about HMICFRS findings on force culture issues and developing a positive workplace, which had been assessed as *requires improvement*. The Member asked what further reassurance the PCC would seek to ensure improvements were made in the areas highlighted in the report. The Commissioner explained that the Force were reviewing several areas including case-load supervision and suitable one-to-one support through the

line management system. The results from the internal employee opinion survey were expected in February 2024, and following a review, a further plan would be developed. The Member asked if the internal employee opinion survey was the first in three years. The Head of Performance and Governance explained that there had been various internal surveys on different issues over the years but that, in terms of a formal Force satisfaction survey, it was the first in three years.

8. A Member asked if there were plans to ensure that the category of 'Protecting vulnerable people' would improve, following its *adequate* rating. The Commissioner explained that the Force was not in a bad place. The Force was recording well, and the Force's support offer was considered good, with good areas of practice, including the use of stalking prevention orders. The Commissioner confirmed that further discussion with the Force would take place, and it was an area less about significant revision and more about refinement. The findings of the inspection were useful and would be used when talking to the Force.
9. Given the issues highlighted in the inspection report, a Member asked if the current scrutiny arrangements had been working effectively. The Head of Performance and Governance explained that scrutiny arrangements were multileveled. At the top level there was a formal scrutiny programme and scheduled meetings with the Chief and Deputy Constable to evaluate specific issues. The data hub made information available to the public. The OPCC were embedded on most Force performance and governance boards, which provided direct information of the challenges facing the force, which aided the building of the scrutiny work programme. The Commissioner added that almost all areas highlighted in the inspection report already had a plan in place for improvement. The Commissioner was attending meetings with the Chief Constable at least once a week, and was meeting frequently with other officers, and was confident that the OPCC had robust scrutiny arrangements in place.
10. Regarding reoffending rates, a Member asked what plans could be developed to further improve upon schemes such as Checkpoint Plus. The Commissioner explained that a lot of work was happening to ensure the Force was making best use of this scheme. The Head of Performance and Governance brought attention to the published reoffending strategy on the OPCC's website and explained that accommodation-based services were a pressure point when it came to reducing reoffending, with the national cost increases. The Chief Executive (OPCC) explained that this issue would get more focus over coming months as part of the government's anti-social behaviour action plan under the proposed Immediate Justice Scheme. The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner added that the women's strategy forum in Surrey specifically looks at reducing initial offending, reoffending and the impact offending had on children.

Action iii: The Head of Performance and Governance to circulate the reoffending strategy.

11. A Member asked if there were any efforts being made to increase the number of people who sign up to schemes aimed at reducing reoffending and what the strategy was for those that do not. The Chief Executive (OPCC) explained that it depended on the scheme. There was an element to the Checkpoint plus scheme, where if a person did not complete the intervention, then there was the risk of prosecution. In terms of immediate justice, there was less of a compulsion to take part, but those who had been involved in the pilot schemes in other force areas had reported good rates of engagement.

Resolved:

That the Surrey Police and Crime Panel

- I. Notes the update provided and looks forward to the formal response to the Inspection being published imminently. The Panel will issue its formal response to the inspection once this is received.
- II. Notes that the Inspection report highlights areas of good performance (preventing crime, managing offenders) but also a number of areas for improvement that have been highlighted by the Panel including around call performance and response compliance. Expresses its concern that 'responding to the public' is currently assessed as *inadequate* and asks the Commissioner to report to the Panel in June 2024 on progress addressing this and other 'Areas for Improvement', and on assurances sought from the Chief Constable. Further notes the importance of ensuring Surrey Police is equipped and resourced to address these concerns.
- III. Highlights that although the Force is experiencing challenges in the way it responds to the public via its contact centre, considerable efforts have been made by the Chief Constable to respond to broader concerns raised by residents over shop lifting and in public *policing your community* events. This has led to increased operational focus in areas important to the public which is to be commended.
- IV. Welcomes Surrey Police's relatively high use of Community Resolutions because it reduces reoffending. However, the Chief Constable is right to prioritise increasing the charge rate, which is the lowest in the country. Hopefully, this can be done without charging offenders who would be more appropriately dealt with by Community Resolutions.
- V. Urges the Commissioner to ensure that the Force continues to improve solved rates and that the quality and professionalism of the police is maintained.

7/24 SURREY POLICE GROUP FINANCIAL REPORT FOR MONTH EIGHT OF FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24 [Item 7]

Witnesses:

Lisa Townsend, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Kelvin Menon, Chief Finance Officer, and Treasurer (OPCC)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. A Member asked if there had been any change to the assessed risk of Surrey issuing a section 114. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the risk was low for Surrey Police. The Force would have to make significant savings, which would be achievable when compared with the overall budget, but it might result in operational impacts.
2. A Member asked where the majority of the £1.9 million overspend in overtime, which offset the projected underspend in staff salaries (£1.7 million), was occurring and if the OPCC was expecting this trend to continue in 2024/25. The Chief Finance Officer explained that it was a challenge for the Force. Overtime had risen both for police staff and police officers. For officers it was in areas such as specialist crime, firearms officers, and custody officers, who had supported Operation Safeguard. For Staff, the largest element of overtime was in contact services, due to vacancies. The overtime in contact was expected to reduce because the team was now over establishment. Police officer overtime was expected to continue as those officers had specialist skills and there were shortages in investigative officers and detectives. The Deputy Chief Constable chairs an overtime working group looking at ways to reduce overtime, taking into account the cost and wellbeing of officers.
3. A member asked if answers could be provided to written questions submitted in the context of the Panel's Finance Sub-group. Regarding revenue generation, the member asked what accounted for the largest element of unexpected income. The Chief Finance Officer explained it was Operation Safeguard, which involved prisoners being put in custody facilities after sentencing before being moved to a prison because of prison overcrowding. Operation safeguard had now ended. A further £0.7 million was income for seconding officers to regional units and around £0.5 million was income was to do with interest rates being higher than anticipated and the sale of vehicles.

Action iv: The Chief Finance Officer to provide answers to questions provided from a member of panel and finance sub-group.

4. The Member asked for confirmation that while the headline underspend was £1.1 million, the actual underspend was £3.2 million because reserves that were expected to be used were not. The Chief Finance Officer explained that

the Force had managed to deliver some of the efficiencies, that were to be due in 2024/25, earlier. This meant the Force had not needed to use all the cost of change reserve as originally anticipated. This reduction in use of the reserves was a one-off benefit as the money would be put be used for further transformation and cost of change activities to drive savings for future years. The Member asked how much of the income received was budgeted for and if any provision was made for mutual aid. The Chief Finance Officer explained that there was provision £19m in the budget for grants and income.

5. A member asked if the overachievement in the Force's savings target for 2023/24 was the early results of the transformation and change programme. The Chief Finance Officer explained that some of the savings were to do with the change programme, such as the restructure of people services and changes to shift patterns. Some of the savings had come through the renegotiation of contracts, such as software licenses and Operation Polar Bear, which was to do with reducing energy in facilities. Therefore, there were several initiatives that drove the underspend, and those savings would be carried forward into 2024/25.
6. A Member asked about the requirement for capital to fund productivity improvements and net zero in the future, and if it would be done through external borrowing. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the government did not provide any capital funding to Forces. There was a campaign by the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) to address this. The Force would try to fund some capital costs out of revenue. Where there was a clear business case for investing to save (e.g. through solar) the Force could potentially borrow to finance it. However, the amount of funding the Force would need to meet the net zero target, for example through introducing electric vehicles, would be substantial and so this would need to be addressed by government at a national level.

Resolved:

The committee noted the report.

8/24 2024/25 POLICE BUDGET AND PROPOSED PRECEPT [Item 8]

Witnesses:

Lisa Townsend, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner
Ellie Vesey-Thompson, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Kelvin Menon, Chief Finance Officer & Treasurer (OPCC)
Nathan Rees, Head of Communications and Engagement (OPCC)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. A Member asked for clarification on the key findings of the public consultation. The Head of Communication (OPCC) explained that 41% supported the £13 precept increase, 11% supported a £12 increase, 2% supported a £11 increase, 7% supported a £10 increase and 39% supported an increase under £10. Overall, 61% of respondents supported a precept rise of £10 or above.
2. A Member asked how many police staff posts the Force would cut if a lower precept was implemented. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the Force would be looking at other ways to make efficiencies and savings before reducing staff. A precise figure could not be provided but each £1 on council tax represented around £0.5 million, which represented around 12 staff posts.
3. A Member queried if it was expected that most Police and Crime Commissioners would be recommending the £13 precept increase. The Commissioner explained that the government had assumed in its funding allocation announcement that all Forces would increase by the maximum amount of £13. The Commissioner's understanding following discussions with other Commissioners was that they would be seeking the £13 precept increase, apart from in Wales who were seeking more.
4. A Member asked about the 2024/25 proposed revenue budget increase of 7.3% on the current year, which was above inflation and above the pay rise. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the largest element of the increase was the result of the 7% pay rise and increase in pension employer contributions. The Member asked about the £7.1 million of savings required from the revenue budget in 2025/26. The Chief Finance Officer explained that there were plans to address the savings required in 2025/26 including via transformational reviews in criminal justice, rationalising evidence stores and work to streamline paper-based processes. It would be a challenge and there was a risk that savings could be pushed into future years. The Chief Finance Officer explained that an impact on services in 2025/26 was a possibility but work was being done to minimise this. This could also be impacted by a change, such as receiving a larger grant, but the prediction could only be based on the current estimates.
5. A Member queried the current anticipated underspend, and historic underspends against the budget and suggested this cast doubt on whether the full precept increase was needed. The Chief Finance Officer explained that underspends were generally a one-off and had arisen out of specific circumstances. In 2022/23 it was the phasing of recruitment, particularly for uplift officers whereas in the current year it was more to do with additional income. The factors driving the underspends were not considered to be recurrent and hence could not be assumed for future years. Unfortunately, due to the capping rules it was not possible to make up any shortfall in funding

through Council Tax in future years and so a more prudent approach was therefore necessary.

6. The Member highlighted that borough and district councils are constrained in the amount they could increase council tax, whereas the amount the Police and Crime Commissioner could increase had generally been more generous. The Member queried if taking the maximum council tax increase in this context was appropriate. The Chief Finance Officer acknowledged that districts and boroughs were more constrained but explained that Surrey Police were the lowest proportionately funded police force in the country. This meant council tax was relied upon more to fund policing than in other counties. Districts and boroughs also had the ability to raise their own income for example through parking charges and other discretionary services whereas the Force did not have the same ability.
7. A Member asked how confident the OPCC was around the assumptions made on non-pay inflation and what scale of additional financial challenge further inflationary rises would present. The Chief Finance Officer explained that for 2024/25, non-pay inflation had been assumed at 3%, which was in line with the government's inflation target. 1% on non-pay would add about £600,000 in costs, which was equivalent to about £1.20 on council tax. If this happened the Force would initially look to try to absorb this, such as by renegotiating contracts or buying less, but it could result in staff reductions.
8. A Member asked if the Chief Constable had proposed any specific areas for increased focus and investment if the precept was increased to the maximum amount and how the OPCC would ensure that progress would be robustly monitored. The Commissioner explained that the Chief Constable was looking to deliver the core elements of his vision, which was set out in paragraphs 32 and 33 of the report. For residents, this would include answering calls faster; responding to victims more quickly; increasing the number of offenders charged and crimes detected; improving the response to violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse; maintaining visibility and responding robustly to public concerns about lawlessness. The Force was in the process of agreeing a set of quantitative indicators which would include a baseline and targets for the various objectives of the Chief Constable's plan. These would be finalised shortly. An update could be provided at the next Panel meeting.
9. In relation to an increase in the OPCC's net operating costs of 11.4% in the next year, a Member asked if the Commissioner had considered making any savings in office costs for example through savings in public relations or doing without a deputy. The Commissioner explained that none of the increase in operating costs were due to any change in the office size, it was the result of increases in current staff wages in line with the police pay rise. The Chief Executive (OPCC) explained that the Surrey OPCC was still one of the smallest in the country and

it would not be the right time to make any significant changes to the structure of the office right before an election, although any new incumbent may wish to revisit it.

10. A member asked about the 10% vacancy factor budgeted for Police Staff in 2024/25 and how this compared to the current vacancy position of around 13%. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the current level of vacancies in Police Staff was due to challenges in recruitment. Some areas of the Force had a vacancy margin of zero, for example in the contact service, whereas others had a higher factor depending on its operational risk. An element of the transformation work would look to convert excess vacancies into permanent reductions in staffing to embed savings. The areas with the highest current vacancies relate to specialist crime, particularly in forensics, people services and learning and development. Putting police officers into vacant staff posts was something the Force wanted to avoid unless it made sense operationally.
11. In respect of the police funding formula, a Member asked what the Commissioner thought the reasons were for the Home Office treating Surrey unfairly. The Commissioner explained that she did not think the Home Office treated Surrey unfairly but that it was the result of an old funding formula that had been in place for too long. An assumption could not be made that any potential change to the funding formula would benefit Surrey, although the Commissioner hoped Surrey would receive a better deal. The Member highlighted past comments by the Commissioner that she could persuade the government to change the funding formula to make it more favourable. The Commissioner stated that ministerial commitments had been made to change the funding formula, and numerous members of the Home Office believed this would happen.
12. A Member asked about reduced estate costs and remote working, and if a financial contingency had been considered if there was a drive to more office-based work. The Commissioner explained that many of the Force's staff and Officers could do some work remotely, but some areas such as contact, investigations and forensics could not be done remotely. The future estates plan does assume a smaller footprint which would lead to an increased utilisation of space, from the current 32% to 86%, and a reduction in square meters per person, from 14 to 8, bringing the Force more in line with national trends. This reduction in estate operating costs would be needed to fund the re-development of HQ.
13. A Member noted support for the precept proposal which equated to around 25p per week extra for a Band D property. This represented good value for money for Surrey residents. A Member asked about the assumption made that the referendum limit for a precept rise in future years would be set at 2% and asked where this figure had come from. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the OPCC had to make a best guess, but it could be higher or lower.

14. Summarising, the Chairman noted his support for the Police as an ex-police officer, but also his appreciation that this was a difficult time for residents many of whom were struggling financially. The Chairman agreed with the comments made publicly by the PCC that the central government funding formula was unfair and that council tax payments of Surrey residents should not be relied upon, disproportionately, to fund the force, as was currently the case.
15. The Chairman noted the recommendation in the report - *That the Panel endorse the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner's proposal to increase the Precept for a Band D property by £13 (being a 4.2% increase) to £323.57 in 2024/25* – and invited Panel members to vote. A recorded vote was requested. Members were asked to vote 'yes' (to endorse the precept), 'no' or to 'abstain' with the results as follows:

Cllr Barry J F Cheyne- Yes
 Cllr Alex Coley- No
 Cllr Daniella Newson- No
 Cllr Paul Kennedy- No
 Cllr Victor Lewanski- Yes
 Cllr Nick Prescott- Yes
 Cllr Harry Boparai- No
 Cllr Keith Witham- Yes
 Cllr Richard Wilson- No
 Cllr Richard Smith- Yes
 Cllr Ellen Nicholson- No
 Mr Martin Stilwell (Vice-Chairman)- Yes
 Ms Juliet Fryer- Yes
 Cllr John Robini (Chairman)- No

16. Seven members voted for the proposal and seven against. With the Chairman's casting vote the majority did not support the precept proposal and the meeting was adjourned for private deliberation by the Panel around potential use of the Panel veto. Summarising this discussion, the Chairman explained that following a lively private debate the result was unchanged and the requirement for a veto to be agreed by two-thirds of the Panel membership was not met.

Resolved:

That the Surrey PCP records:

- I. That a majority of the Surrey Police and Crime Panel (which included the Chairman's casting vote) did not approve the PCC's proposal to increase the Band D Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Precept by £13 to £323.57.

- II. That the requirement for a veto to be agreed by two-thirds of the Panel membership (which equates to 10 Panel members) was not met.
- III. That the Panel accepted that the PCC's proposal to increase the Band D Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Precept by £13 to £323.57 will come into effect.
- IV. That the Panel expresses disappointment at the government settlement and the unfair funding formula which places a disproportionate burden on Surrey residents to fund the Force. This lack of appropriate level of government funding should be resolved and is a more appropriate way to meet Surrey's needs in the long term.
- V. 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).

Action v: Cllr Witham asked for the Panel's conclusion around the unfair funding formula which places a disproportionate burden on Surrey residents to be circulated to Surrey MPs.

9/24 PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEETINGS [Item 9]

Resolved:

The Panel noted the report.

10/24 PCC FORWARD PLAN AND KEY DECISIONS [Item 10]

Resolved:

The Panel noted the report.

11/24 COMMISSIONER'S QUESTION TIME [Item 11]

Witnesses:

Lisa Townsend, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner
Alison Bolton, The Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer (OPCC)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. A Member asked if the OPCC was just a recipient of the Joint Neighbourhood survey or if it was jointly contracted. The Head of Performance and Governance explained that the survey was jointly contracted by Surrey County Council and Surrey Police, and both pull their respective pieces of data out of it.
2. A Member asked if there was currently a backlog with vetting and what percentage of vetting completions the Force was currently at. The Chief

Executive (OPCC) explained that the levels of backlog the Force had a few months ago had been reduced. There was a backlog but there were no delays of the same level.

3. A Member asked if the Commissioner was satisfied that the distribution of ANPR cameras was effective to support the objectives in the Commissioner's plan. The Commissioner believed that what was in place was effective, but there would always be room to do more and the OPCC would always support more resources and measures.

Action vi: The Chief Executive (OPCC) to provide the details of the vetting backlog.

12/24 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED SINCE LAST MEETING [Item 12]

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. No complaints were received.

Resolved:

The Panel noted the report.

13/24 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 13]

Resolved:

The Panel noted the tracker and forward work programme.

14/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 14]

The next Panel meeting will be held in June 2024. The April session to be cancelled as it falls within the pre-election period for Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

Meeting ended: 13:18

Chairman

This page is intentionally left blank