

AGENDA ITEM I

NORTHUMBRIA PCC MINUTES

Title

Business Meeting

Date

1 November 2023

Location

Teams/MEL

Duration

1.30pm-2.45pm

Present:

Kim McGuinness – Police and Crime Commissioner

Vanessa Jardine – Chief Constable (CC)

Jayne Meir – Deputy Chief Constable

Ruth Durham – Chief of Staff of the OPCC

Adrian Pearson – Director of Planning and Delivery (OPCC)

Tanya Reade – Corporate Governance Manager (NP)

Kevin Laing – Chief Finance Officer (CFO)

Paul Godden – Head of Corporate Development (NP)

Steven Hume – Director of Violence Reduction Unit (OPCC)

Laura Repton – Public Affairs and Governance Officer (OPCC)

Vicki Wilson – Minute Taker (OPCC)

OPEN SESSION

The PCC welcomed Jayne Meir, the newly appointed Deputy Chief Constable for Northumbria Police.

1. Minutes of the open session of Business Meeting held on 28 September 2023

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that had not been included in the agenda.

3. Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) Update

The Director of the VRU highlighted the main points from the report.

The VRU, in partnership with colleagues in Newcastle City Council and Northumbria



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Police had recently finalised a knife and offensive weapon protocol for schools. The protocol would be shared with schools in the next few weeks with Newcastle adopting the arrangements, followed by Gateshead and the remaining Local Authorities over the coming weeks.

It was noted that the media had been made aware of this protocol and there was a slight concern to ensure they were aware this was not in place due to being a highly problematic issue, but more of a pro-active tool being used as a preventative measure.

Information Sharing to Tackle Violence (ISTV) comprises a small de-identified dataset collected by A&E Hospital departments and covers all A&E attendances resulting from violent incidents.

ISTV collated from Sunderland had been identified in the report. The next step was to collect this data on a consistent basis from all 6 LA areas, and the aim was to have this available in the coming months. From a policing point of view, this would enhance intelligence in hotspot areas as well as assist with licensing and wider operational deployments.

During September the VRU hosted four workshops within local authority areas to continue the implementation of arrangements to meet the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty. The next step was to work with participants to develop a draft action plan for each area which would support the revised strategy and strategic needs assessment which were due to be considered by the Strategic Violence Reduction Board in November.

The CC noted a concern that had been raised that the relationship between Northumbria Police and the VRU should be more effective and queried what plans could be put in place for this to happen. The Director of the VRU felt although the relationship was extremely positive, more rigorous lines of communication needed to be in place but also more integrated specialist teams from the force to carry out the practical work with the VRU, to tackle specific issues would improve relations and information sharing between both sides.

The Winter Homicide Prevention Campaign was likely to focus on the impact of 'one punch' homicides linked to the night-time economy and would largely be Police led. Despite local data suggesting this was not a major issue for Northumbria, the VRU would be keen to assist in any areas that were relevant.

4. Capital Monitoring Q2

The CFO highlighted the main points from the report.

In addition to the quarterly update to Business Meeting, a monthly Capital monitoring report was now received by the Force Executive, with any issues escalated to the Police and Crime Commissioner.



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A table highlighting the 2023-24 Scheme Expenditure had been highlighted. This had been broken down into three main areas: Estates, Digital, and Vehicles & Equipment. Actual spends and under spends had been outlined against each area with specific reasons.

Particular points to note were as follows:

- Following a tender exercise, a new boat shed was not considered to be a viable option and would not go ahead. This resulted in an under-spend of £0.114m.
- Refurbishments of Byker, Whickham & Alnwick were on hold pending the outcome of Priority Based Budgeting and a review of the estate's refurbishment programme. The budgets had been rephased to 2024/25.
- Work on the planning for the Integrated Command and Operational Centre was ongoing. The budget provision was not expected to be fully required this year and would be rephased to 2024/25.

The CC understood that the past few years had been financially difficult, however it was felt that quicker progress needed to be made in order to bring the force back to a steady financial position. Therefore, more financially viable decisions were being made and further assistance to develop the Estates Strategy had been sought.

A table highlighting the 2023-24 Capital Financing had been highlighted. The Capital Programme stood at 26.446 (£m), the Forecast Outturn stood at 21.357 (£m) and the Variance stood at 5.089 (£m).

There were no new capital receipts in Q2. Capital receipts carried forward from previous years amounted to £17.271m.

The prudential indicators for capital were set out in a separate appendix, including liability benchmark. All indicators were within the agreed limits as at 30 September 2023.

The PCC approved the Key Decision which was to note the Capital Monitoring position and forecast for Qtr. 2 as at 30 September 2023.

5. Group Revenue Monitoring Q2

The CFO highlighted the main points from the report.

The Group Revenue Budget requirement for 2023/24 had been reassessed as part of regular budget monitoring and the budget planning process for 2024/25, along with the work being undertaken to assess budget pressures on the medium-term financial forecasts to 2027/28. Significant one-off changes had been outlined in the report.



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In addition, continuous interest rate rises by the Bank of England, along with a reduced projected Capital Programme had impacted the OPCC Capital Financing projections. In total an estimated benefit of £0.754m.

A table outlining the Revised Group Revenue Budget 2023/24 had been highlighted. The revised 2023/24 budget would provide flexibility in the Chief Constable's budget to consider spending priorities up to 31 March 2024, and provide a level of flexibility to cover unforeseen costs, manage risk, or changes in the spend profile.

A table outlining the Q2 Revenue Monitoring position had been highlighted. Based on the Q2 spend the forecast outturn had an in-year underspend of £1.252m. This reflected the re-basing of the budget.

The projected year-end budget position inclusive of core OPCC revenue and Supporting Services was currently forecast to be breakeven at the end of the financial year.

The CC advised that a letter had been received stating that from 14 November, there would no longer be funding available for Operation Safeguard (the making available of cells to the Prison Service). This would have an impact on the budget however should this definitely go ahead, the changes would be reflected in the next monthly revised budget.

The Key Decision requested that the PCC approve the revised Group Revenue budget of £348.830m, and note the Group Forecast Outturn of £347.578m.

The PCC approved the Key Decision.

6. Update from Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) and progress against the Internal Audit Work Plan

The CFO highlighted the main points from the report.

The report covered two meetings held by JIAC from both 17 July 2023 and 25 September 2023. Key items from both meetings had been outlined in the report.

7. Terms of Reference for the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC)

The Chief of Staff at the OPCC advised that the current Terms of Reference stated there was a maximum of two four-year terms a member of JIAC could remain on the Committee. However, there were two members who had now completed both terms, and although one would be leaving, the other was willing to stay on the Committee.



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To ensure that the committee membership had the appropriate level of financial experience and in light of the difficulty in recruiting members with such experience, it was proposed that the Terms of Reference were amended to allow appointment for an initial four-year term with the option of a second and third year term, each term being four years. This proposal would mean those members appointed in 2015 would be eligible to remain as JIAC members until 2027.

It was noted however, that this change would be temporary, and the aim would be in 2025 to revert back to the original two terms maximum for committee members.

The Key Decision asked that the PCC and CC agreed to the amendment of the Terms of Reference which would provide continuity to the committee, and the scrutiny process, whilst the recruitment programme continued. A report outlining this change would be presented at the next JIAC in November 2023.

The PCC and the CC approved the Key Decision.

8. Joint Strategic Risk Register (JSRR)

The Head of Corporate Development highlighted the main points from the report.

The OPCC and Northumbria Police shared a JSRR. Each strategic risk was assigned a Chief Officer or OPCC owner, who had responsibility for the management of controls and the implementation of new controls where necessary.

A separate appendix provided an overview of the current RAG status of the strategic risks for Northumbria Police, alongside the Force Strategic Risk Register. Four areas remained high risk for the Force: Digital Policing; Finance; Information & Data Management; and Workforce. The OPCC had assessed one area as high risk: Finance.

9. HMICFRS Publication: A report into the effectiveness of vetting arrangements in Northumbria Police

The DCC highlighted the main points from the report.

Northumbria was inspected in May 2023 for vetting only and graded 'Adequate'. HMICFRS found that Northumbria Police used Core-Vet to manage its vetting records, however the system was not linked with People Services systems. This would be remedied as part of the implementation of the new HRIT system. In the interim the Force Vetting Unit (FVU) had well established links with People Services, which informed of internal moves, promotions or people leaving the force.



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HMICFRS determined that whilst the Force had increased staffing levels in the FVU, there were still insufficient staff to manage the demand at the time. The FVU had recently lost two staff members to external roles, these posts have been advertised.

The FVU had paused progress on the Designated Posts List since May 2023 until the revised criteria for Management Vetting (MV) was confirmed in Jan 2024. The proposed revised criteria for MV would see the removal of vulnerability, and focus mainly on access to and potential abuse of force assets or finances.

The PCC queried the MV and whether the new criteria would be all encompassing to ensure nothing was missed. The DCC advised that the vetting criteria would only ever cover particular information and would not be able to indicate any specific issues i.e. whether an employee had the potential to harass, bully, or intend to break the law. The CC advised that work was ongoing regarding profiling of employees and the need to be more proactive with regards to trends in behaviour in order to act swiftly.

One AFI had been identified within the HMICFRS report for which work was ongoing or complete. This stated that the force should improve its vetting arrangements to make sure that:

- All personnel had been vetted to a high enough level for the posts they hold.
- All non-police personnel were vetted to the required level for the role they were contracted for.
- The FVU had sufficient resources to meet the demand it faced.
- The FVU had a robust process to research and assess all notifications of changes of circumstances in a timely manner.

This report would be presented again at a future Scrutiny meeting in order to update on the progress being made.

10. National issues impacting Policing

The CC met with the PCC on a weekly basis to update on any current and future issues. The CC noted there had been a recent Community Tension meeting which, due to international conflict between Israel and Palestine, could see the national threat level increase. The PCC was aware that this had resulted in an increase of hate crimes, and one specific incident had been discussed where the hate crime had also met the criteria of a terror threat. The force would continue to treat all incidents impartially and with professionalism.

11. Forward Plan – Open Session

The Forward Plan had been noted.

12. Any Other Business



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There was no other business to discuss.

13. Date and Time of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on Wednesday 20 December 2023 – 2pm – Middle Engine Lane/Teams.