NORTHUMBRIA POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

AGENDA ITEM 1

NORTHUMBRIA OPCC MINUTES

Title
Joint Business Meeting

Date	**Location**	**Duration**
18 May 2026	Victory House	1pm–3pm

Present:
Susan Dungworth – Police and Crime Commissioner
Ruth Durham – Chief of Staff (OPCC)
Vanessa Jardine – Chief Constable (CC)
Clare Penny-Evans – Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Tanya Reade – Corporate Governance Manager (NP)
Alastair Simpson – ACC (Crime and Safeguarding)
Joscelin Lawson – Assistant Chief Officer, Corporate Services
Nicola Seymour – Superintendent Staff Officer
Vicki Wilson – Minute Taker (OPCC)

Apologies:
Jayne Meir – Deputy Chief Constable
Gail Thompson – Joint Chief Finance Officer
Hannah Craig – Inspector (Staff Officer) NP

OPEN SESSION

1. Minutes of the Open Session of the Business Meeting held on 12 March 2026

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. National Issues Impacting on Policing

Chief Constable's Strategic Update

The Chief Constable provided a strategic update on national policing reform and associated consultation activity. It was noted that a national call for evidence on police reform was being responded to through both a regional submission and a separate force-specific submission. The regional submission reflected the collective view of chief constables that a move from a seven-force model to a single force would be disproportionate, while the force submission set out mitigations should a seven-force structure be pursued, including governance, legislative change, and operational resilience considerations.

The Chief Constable also updated on emerging operational and financial pressures, including the significant cost of policing football derbies and the need to explore more sustainable partnership-funded approaches. An update was provided on preparations for potential World Cup-related activity, including anticipated fan zones and the proportionate policing response aligned to match progression and licensing considerations.

Additional discussions covered ongoing national issues including protest policing costs, retrospective and live facial recognition usage, firearms licensing capacity and backlogs, and emerging national pilots and ministerial engagement.

Police and Crime Commissioner's Strategic Update

The Police and Crime Commissioner reflected on recent engagement with national stakeholders, highlighting ongoing concerns regarding funding levels, protest policing, and football-related costs which disproportionately impacted metropolitan areas.

The Commissioner noted the importance of continued dialogue at a national level to ensure these pressures were understood and considered in future funding arrangements.

The Commissioner also highlighted interest in the national debate on facial recognition and wider public confidence implications, noting the importance of transparency, safeguards, and appropriate governance in the use of such technology.

4. Terms of Reference – OPCC Scrutiny Meeting, Joint Business Meeting, and OPCC Business Meeting

The Chief of Staff at the OPCC presented the draft Terms of Reference for the OPCC Scrutiny Meetings, Joint Business Meetings, and OPCC Business Meetings.

It was explained that the development of these documents followed previous audit findings, and aimed to formalise governance arrangements, clarify purpose, scope, scrutiny methodology, and ways of working.

Members discussed the distinction between business and scrutiny functions, the importance of ethics, standards, and statutory responsibilities within scrutiny, and the value of the documents in supporting transparency for internal stakeholders and the public.

It was noted that the Terms of Reference would be published and incorporated into the wider governance framework, with further refinement to reflect national policy drivers and emerging scrutiny requirements.

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference would be updated to reflect the discussion and progressed as part of the wider governance framework.

5. HMICFRS: The policing response to the investigation of online child sexual abuse and the management of registered sex offenders

The Assistant Chief Constable for Crime and Safeguarding presented an overview of the HMICFRS spotlight report, outlining the sustained and increasing demand associated with online child sexual abuse investigations and the lifelong management of registered sex offenders.

The discussion covered the full investigative lifecycle, safeguarding considerations, digital forensics capacity, performance management, workforce wellbeing, and partnership working.

It was reported that the force was broadly well aligned with the recommendations of the report, with established governance, case management oversight, and safeguarding arrangements in place.

An update was given regarding the emerging work to explore automation and AI-supported tools to reduce administrative burden whilst retaining human oversight and professional judgement, noting both the opportunities and associated risk considerations.

6. Update from Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) following JIAC on 23 February 2026 and Progress against the Internal Audit Work Plan

An update was provided on the outcomes of the Joint Independent Audit Committee meeting held on 23 February 2026.

Members were advised that the overall assurance position was positive, with no significant issues escalated. Discussion covered financial resilience, audit capacity, governance arrangements, strategic risk management, and the Annual Governance Statement.

It was noted that whilst complaint volumes had been raised by committee members, these were contextualised appropriately and did not, in themselves, indicate governance failure. Progress against internal audit actions and outstanding HMICFRS sign-offs were also discussed.

7. Joint Strategic Risk Register

The ACO for Corporate Services presented the quarterly update on the Joint Strategic Risk Register.

Changes to risk assessments had been highlighted, including reductions in certain operational and workforce risks following successful mitigation activity. Updates were provided on digital policing, public confidence, vetting, equipment provision, pensions remedy delivery, and partnership funding risks.

It was explained that some risks were managed locally and did not appear on the joint register, with Appendix C providing transparency on escalation decisions.

8. Sustainability Strategy

The Sustainability Strategy paper was not available for this meeting. It was agreed this would be deferred to the meeting on 11 June.

9. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan had been noted. The Corporate Governance Manager advised that at the time of preparation, not all corporate scrutiny items had been fully confirmed or allocated between open and closed sessions. It was highlighted that some items may default to the closed session depending on sensitivity. The July meeting was identified as a key point for consideration of legacy KPIs as part of embedding the Police Performance Framework, with revised KPIs expected to progress through scrutiny.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next Joint Business Meeting would be held at Victory House on Thursday 11 June 2026 at 2pm.