



POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 2 JULY 2026

Present: Cllrs Alasdair Keddie (Chair), Louise Bown (Vice-Chair), Cameron Adams, Patrick Canavan, David Flagg, Simon Gibson, Peter Sidaway and Carl Woode

Apologies: Cllrs Louie O'Leary and Sarah Williams

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Simon Bullock (Chief Executive, OPCC), Marc Eyre (Service Manager for Assurance), Adam Harrold (OPCC Director of Operations), Jonathan Mair (Director - Assurance (Monitoring Officer)), Megan Rochester (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), David Sidwick (Police and Crime Commissioner), Julie Strange (OPCC Chief Finance Officer), Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice) and Heather Williamson (HR Business Partner).

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Friday 6th February 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting

3. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

4. **Confirmation Hearing - Chief Constable Appointment (00:11:31 on the recording)**

Cllr Keddie welcomed Deputy Chief Constable Farrell (DCC Farrell), the preferred candidate for the position of Chief Constable and outlined the process of the confirmation hearing.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) introduced DCC Farrell and advised that the Chief Constable role was integral to the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan and the priorities identified by the public. The PCC paid tribute to the previous Chief Constable, thanking her for her dedicated service and significant contribution to Dorset Police. Members were informed that a full recruitment process had been undertaken to identify a candidate capable of supporting the force in reducing crime and delivering the objectives of the Police and Crime Plan. The PCC noted that a recruitment video had been produced as part of the process and that

attracting candidates to Chief Constable roles remained an ongoing challenge. The PCC then outlined the recruitment process that had been followed in making the appointment.

DCC Farrell was invited to introduce herself to the Panel. She provided members with an overview of her background and outlined her reasons for seeking appointment as Chief Constable of Dorset Police (00:34:08 on recording). DCC Farrell stated that she cared deeply about public service and was proud of Dorset Police, highlighting the talent and dedication of its officers and staff in achieving strong outcomes for communities. She described Dorset Police as a “small but mighty” force and advised that, if appointed, her role would be to support and empower officers and staff to protect the communities they served. She also emphasised the importance of investing in people, strengthening trust and confidence within communities, maintaining a visible and connected presence across Dorset, and ensuring that Dorset Police continued to strive for improvement in its pursuit of keeping Dorset safe.

Panel Members were then given the opportunity to put forward questions to the PCC and DCC Farrell (00:38:09 on recording).

Cllr Keddie felt the process had been conducted well but would have welcomed more candidates. He noted wider national issues relating to the selection of Chief Constables, which were beyond the Panel’s remit but felt that it should be noted.

The Chief Executive (OPCC) confirmed that the candidate met the criteria for the post as set out in the role profile.

DCC Farrell responded to questions (01:02:56 on recording) and welcomed scrutiny, recognising the importance of accountability and confirming that she would work constructively with the Panel. She stated that governance arrangements enabled the force to monitor delivery effectively and provided clear expectations, adding that she welcomed discussions on where improvements were needed. DCC Farrell highlighted neighbourhood policing as a key strength and noted that neighbourhood engagement was subject to robust oversight arrangements.

Cllr Keddie thanked DCC Farrell for attending the meeting and for her detailed responses to Members’ questions. Thanks, were also extended to officers for their work in supporting the recruitment process.

5. **Exempt Part of Confirmation Hearing - Chief Constable Appointment**

Proposed by, Cllr David Flagg, seconded by Cllr Peter Sideaway

Decision: That the press and the public be excluded for the following item(s) in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

The Panel members retired to make their decision.

Proposed by: Cllr Alasdair Keddie, seconded by Cllr Simon Gibson

Decision: That the appointment of Ms Rachell Farrell to the role of Chief Constable was approved.

6. **Election for Chair/Vice-Chair (02:16:09 on the recording)**

It was Proposed by Cllr David Flagg and seconded by Cllr Peter Sideaway that Cllr Alasdair Keddie be elected as Chair of the Police and Crime Panel.

It was proposed by Cllr Alasdair Keddie and seconded by Cllr Carl Woode that Cllr Louise Bown be appointed Vice-Chair of the Police and Crime Panel.

Decision: that Cllr Alasdair Keddie and Cllr Louise Bown was appointed as chair and Vice Chair of the Police and Crime Panel.

7. **Q4 Monitoring Report 2025/26 (02:20:20 on the recording)**

The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that total crime had fallen, with burglary and acquisitive crime significantly reduced. He noted that, despite the closure of the Hotspot Action Fund, Dorset Police remained accountable for delivery. Reference was also made to national data on vehicle crime.

The Panel heard that regular road safety enforcement campaigns had taken place, including a joint operation with the DVLA earlier in the year. The PCC also highlighted a recent blog on protecting Dorset businesses and ongoing work to improve outcomes in tackling shoplifting.

A review of mobile police stations had been completed, identifying areas for further consideration, with a further review requested following the busy summer period. Progress was also reported on the implementation of the High-Risk Victim Service, with future updates to be provided to the Panel.

The PCC outlined work to address substance misuse, including campaigns aimed at young people to raise awareness of the risks associated with ketamine, alongside continued lobbying for a change in its classification. Through Operation Scorpion, 92 arrests had been made and illegal drugs and weapons removed from the streets.

Members were also informed about support for domestic abuse victims through the provision of emergency “grab bags”, increased enforcement activity relating to waste crime and fly-tipping, and locally funded educational initiatives in schools to help prevent crime among young people. Reference was made to work supporting restrictions on smartphone use in schools, with 14 schools in Dorset having introduced a ban.

The PCC concluded by reiterating efforts to secure fairer funding for Dorset.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority one – Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (02:35:23 on the recording).

- Anticipated effect of hotspot action fund closure, future plans to sustain the positive effects that's had?
- How does Dorset track against the national data in relation to vehicle crime and theft offences?
- How does the prevention of escalating neighbourhood disputes feature within your Police and Crime Plan, and what strategic measures are you driving to address risks such as intimidation and criminal damage?
- Can the commissioner provide an overview of what level of funding is attributed to the community initiative Operation Relentless; how much has been spent and on what?
- With regards to scooters and bikes, the Force were considering trialling a scheme run in Manchester. Is there any progress to report? Also, how successful were the days of action at Kinson, and are the schemes going to be rolled out more widely?

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (02:56:50 on recording) and at appendix 1.

In accordance with Procedural Rule 8.1 the committee voted to extend the duration of the meeting.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority two – Make Policing More Visible and Connected (03:14:44 on the recording).

- What action is the PCC taking to ensure that policing has a digital evidence management system that is fit for purpose based on current technology

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (03:16:45 on recording) and at appendix 1.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority three – Fight Violent Crime and High Harm (03:06:43 on the recording).

- There have been a recent number of sexual assault incidents in Bournemouth, on the seafront and associated areas. What data does the Police have on these incidents? Do the stats follow a seasonal pattern with previous years or is there a spike in figures for this year? To what extent is resourcing on proactive visible policing subject to a strategic assessment based on seasonal trend information? Can the PCC expand on the role of the dedicated VAWG officer with his team on horizon scanning and proactive work on sexual assault prevention?

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (03:08:25 on recording) and at appendix 1.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority four – Cut Fight Rural Crime (03:24:34) on the recording

- The performance report refers to educating dog owners in relation to disturbance of animal stock. Can the PCC provide us with further data on number of reports and response?

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (03:25:08 on recording) and at appendix 1.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority five – Put Victim and Communities First (03:32:07 on the recording).

- The effects of seasonality are happening in real time, with neighbourhood policing seemingly abstracted. How is this being quantified so that impacts on neighbourhood policing can be assessed? The intention from central government was that extra funding in neighbourhood policing should provide a dedicated resource. However, in practice is this resource being abstracted to meet seasonal demands?
- Could details be given of data collected in relation to Op Ford? How many incidents have been logged in the last 12 months and is any action taken in relation to these cases other than recording the individual details?

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (03:34:32 on recording) and at appendix 1.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority six – Make Every Penny Count (03:50:57 on the recording).

- Can the PCC provide an update on those grant funding issues that were unclear at the time of the precept meeting?
- The absence rates for officers was noted. Can the PCC provide detail of the impacts across the force and the extent that the impacts are on particular age profiles/ demographics/ roles? How closely are the drivers for absence being assessed and what prevention measures are taken to the key issues identified? As a point of clarity, do these absence rates include PCSOs?
- Could the OPCC consider providing clearer breakdown of this headline figure on a regular basis

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (03:52:01 on recording) and at appendix 1.

8. Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report (00:17:48 on the recording)

The Police and Crime Commissioner updated the Panel and reported that progress had been good. Members were informed that Dorset was now ranked as the fourth safest area, having previously been ranked tenth. It was also noted that levels of antisocial behaviour were at their lowest since 2008. The Commissioner commended the report and confirmed that performance would continue to be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Cllr Keddie stated that he had read the report and commended the effort and level of detail contained within it. He noted the positive figures relating to antisocial behaviour and referenced the lived experiences of residents within communities. He emphasised the importance of continuing to highlight such issues and maintain appropriate scrutiny. Cllr Keddie thanked Dorset Police for their continued efforts.

9. **Complaints Update (04:10:47 on the recording)**

The Panel received an update on complaints since the last meeting. One complaint had been investigated by the Monitoring Officer and was not upheld, while a further complaint had recently been received and would be investigated.

The Complaints Sub-Committee had met following the Panel meeting on 6 February 2025 and concluded that a complaint had been managed in accordance with the Complaints Protocol, except in relation to timeliness. It also agreed that an explanatory letter should be issued to clarify the escalation process for an unresolved element of the complaint.

The Panel considered proposed amendments to the Complaints Protocol, aligned with Dorset Council's complaints policy, to improve the management of AI-generated complaints, including requiring submission via the existing e-form and allowing lengthy submissions to be summarised.

It was Proposed by Cllr Alasdair Keddie, and seconded by Cllr Cameron Adams, that the adoption of the proposed revisions be agreed.

Decision: The proposed revisions to the Complaints Protocol were agreed.

10. **Forward Workplan (04:14:32 on the recording)**

The forward workplan was noted and members agreed the focus for the next meeting.

11. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

12. **Exempt Business**

There was no additional exempt business.

Appendix 1

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 2.10 pm

Chairman

.....

PCP Questions

2 July 2026

Public Participation

N/A

Chief Constable Confirmation

Question: On what basis was it considered appropriate to set the minimum number of applicants for this role to one and to exclude elected councillors from any of the panels used in the selection process?

Thank you. I determined that the minimum number of eligible candidates required for the process to be valid because I was very familiar with the issues associated with the national shortage of Chief Constable candidates, which are outlined in the briefing box in the paper. This is an entirely pragmatic and necessary decision based on the evidence already discussed.

No decision was taken to exclude elected Councillors from the selection process. Indeed, initiations were extended to the Leaders of both councils, unfortunately however both were unavailable. As a result, the Kent PCC was invited to the Panel.

Question: What actions were taken to encourage more than one candidate to apply and to overcome the apparent reluctance of external or other candidates to apply?

These actions are outlined in the paper, and include:

- Filming a short recruitment video, which was shared to all eligible Chief Officers by the College of Policing
- Producing a glossy candidate information pack, which was publicly posted on my website, and shared through both the APCC and College of Policing websites. This was also picked up by other police publications
- Making locally eligible candidates directly aware through word of mouth, including mentioning the vacancy at regional meetings and boards attended by eligible Chief Officers.
- Speaking with other Chiefs and PCCs about any potential candidates whom they might be aware of

Paper: Annual Report

N/A

Quarterly Monitoring Report

Priority One - Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Question: Can the commissioner provide an overview of what level of funding is attributed to the community initiative Operation Relentless; how much has been spent and on what?

I'm very happy to provide more detail about the Op Relentless Community Fund. It was launched in 2021 to support practical, community-led initiatives that prevent and reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB), giving communities the opportunity to make positive changes in their local areas. The fund provides small grants of up to £5,000 to local organisations to deliver projects that improve community safety, support vulnerable people and also address the causes and impacts of ASB.

Since its inception, the fund has awarded approximately £255,000 across six funding rounds, supporting 64 projects across Dorset. Funded initiatives have included:

- youth diversionary activities,
- mentoring programmes,
- sports and wellbeing projects,
- community outreach schemes,
- environmental improvements and,
- CCTV installations, where appropriate.

In total, the scheme has been wide reaching, having awarded grants in 50 areas across the county, in urban, rural and coastal communities, which demonstrates a good geographic spread across the county.

In March of this year, I launched round 6 of the Fund to again try and empower communities to help reduce ASB. The awards process is now complete, and I can report that just shy of £45,000 has been awarded to 11 applicants.

In this round, funding has been awarded to projects in Verwood, Bridport, Dorchester, Poole, Wareham and Bournemouth.

For this round, the funded projects include:

- Structured, community-led programmes designed to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve perceptions of safety in identified hotspot areas.
- Targeted evening sessions providing positive activities for young people at times when they may be most vulnerable to becoming involved in ASB.
- Structured mentoring programmes for boys aged 13–17 in Bournemouth, supporting those living in areas disproportionately affected by anti-social behaviour.
- Community engagement and diversionary initiatives that provide opportunities to develop skills, confidence and positive social connections.

My team continues to engage with and monitor the grants to ensure they are delivering the desired outcomes.

Question: With regards to e-scooters and bikes, the Force were considering trialling a scheme run in Manchester. Is there any progress to report? Also, how successful were the days of action at Kinson, and are the schemes going to be rolled out more widely?

Yes, this was successfully trialled and the initiative launched in July 2025, under the banner of Op Think.

This operation followed an increase in the number of reported incidents involving such vehicles in areas of Poole and North Bournemouth, and the Force's intention to disrupt this activity by seizing illegal vehicles, arresting offenders and increasing patrols in ASB hotspot areas. The vehicles would then be sent away to be crushed and recycled.

The Force's Innovation Board, which is co-chaired by the Chief Executive, supported the delivery of Op Think with investment in SmartTag forensic spray, as well as partnership working with Bournemouth University who will analyse data we share to provide us with an evidence base for tactical plans in the future.

This has been a great success story, with 10 e-bikes seized in 2024 before the launch of Op Think, rising to 99 last year, and 68 e-scooters seized in 2024 before Op Think, rising to 128 last year, which are the highest levels ever.

Question: Anticipated effect of hotspot action fund closure, future plans to sustain the positive effects that's had?

Dorset Police received two years of Hot Spot action funding between April 2024 and April 2026 amounting to £2m in total. This funding stream has now ceased with the expectation that the approach will become business as usual.

Year 1 covered 36 hot spots and Year 2 was reduced to 18 locations as dictated by the Home Office in order to secure the funding.

With the removal of the HO funding there is greater flexibility. There is strong evidence on the ground. A focus on consistent patrols in a smaller volume of micro-locations during relevant times is likely to deliver better outcomes. The Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB) has developed a revised methodology identifying the key areas and engaging NPT Inspectors to overlay local knowledge. NPTs are in the best position to lead on this. The methodology is as follows:

1. High harm areas: Hot spots identified via the serious organised crime local problem profiles and detailed analysis of force data to focus activity on persistently high areas of violent crime. A sustained high visibility presence coupled with Problem Orientated Policing partnership activities is required to tackle root problems. To use Bournemouth South as an example: 1 micro hotspot accounts for 7% all crimes & incidents during the summer, 4 account for 20%, 10 account for 33%
2. Community focus: NPT identified locations focussing on local community based persistent areas (E.g. Poole bus station). Seasonality will be applied where areas are only 'hot' for part of the year (E.g. Bournemouth beach).
3. Contingency locations: Supporting areas likely to emerge periodically often linked to national or international events such as Op Solar (the NPCC led response to incidents targeting Jewish communities). These locations can be mapped and lie in abeyance pending mobilisation until required.

In short then, Chair, the Force is now dealing with hotspot policing via business as usual. Naturally, the loss of funding is disappointing, but the increased flexibility is allowing the Force to sustain the positive effects of hotspot policing.

Question: How does Dorset track against the national data in relation to vehicle crime and theft offences?

In 2025/26 the Force saw an 18% reduction in theft of motor vehicles when compared with 2024/25. That is a reduction of 198 crimes and puts Dorset Police at 13th nationally. In 2025/26 the Force achieved a positive outcome rate of 6.9%, which is an increase in positive outcomes when compared with 2024/25. This puts us at 10th best nationally.

In 2025/26 the Force saw a 22% reduction in theft from motor vehicle crime when compared with 2024/25. That is a reduction of 563 crimes and puts the Force 32nd nationally. In 2025/26, the Force achieved a positive outcome rate of 1.8%, which is a 1.5% decrease in positive outcomes when compared with 2024/25. This puts the Force at 35th nationally.

Theft of and from motor vehicles are, as I am sure the Panel will appreciate, particularly challenging when it comes to achieving positive outcomes, as a lot of the offences are reported without any investigative lines of enquiry. I have raised this with the Chief Constable.

Priority Two - Make Policing More Visible and Connected

Question: Digital evidence management system - what is the status?

The Dorset Police website, through which members of the public can report a crime, or pass on intelligence is part of a national platform, designed specifically for policing called Single Online Home.

This platform ensures that all crimes and incidents are reported the same way across the country, ensuring consistency in data, and also provides 24/7 accessibility for members of the public.

When making a crime report, members of the public will complete various information fields, one of which will ask whether digital evidence is available – including photographs, audio or video. Members of the public are advised to keep said evidence safe for the moment.

Once the case is reviewed by an investigator and an initial assessment made, the member of the public may be contacted directly by the officer in charge, to request the digital evidence is submitted to them directly. This evidence will then be stored on DP's secure digital evidence management system (or DEMS).

I recognise that this is a two-step process, and members of the public might reasonably expect to be able to submit their digital evidence at the same time as making a crime report. This functionality is not yet available through the national platform, but has been raised for consideration as part of a future build.

In the interim, businesses and members of the public can voluntarily choose to register the location of their CCTV or doorbell cameras on a community portal – which enables Dorset Police to quickly identify, should a crime be committed, whether there are any community cameras in the vicinity, enabling the camera owner's to be contacted proactively by officers.

Priority Three - Fight Violent Crime and High Harm

Question: Re: Sexual Offences in Bournemouth

The number of sexual offences in the Bournemouth Town Centre section area shows a steady decline over the past five years. However, given the numbers of offences on a monthly basis are quite low, the figures tend to jump around.

However, it would be helpful to understand precisely what data are being referred to in this example, so accurate comparisons can be made.

In terms of 'dedicated officers working proactively on sexual assault prevention - Project Vigilant is a national initiative led by policing, aimed at tackling violence against women and girls in the night-time economy and public spaces. It focuses on proactively identifying and disrupting predatory behaviour, as well as ensuring a visible and reassuring presence to support public safety.

Dorset Police is running summer deployments under Project Vigilant in both Bournemouth and Weymouth town centres and beach areas starting in June and running through July and August.

Specialist teams will be using a combination of high-visibility patrols and plain-clothes operations in key areas. The objective is to identify suspicious behaviours early, intervene where necessary, and provide safeguarding opportunities before offences can occur. Plain-clothes officers play a key role within Project Vigilant. By operating discreetly within the night-time economy, they are able to observe behaviours that may not be as visible to uniformed patrols.

This includes identifying individuals displaying signs of predatory intent - such as following, targeting or persistently approaching individuals who may be vulnerable. Where appropriate, plain-clothes officers will intervene directly or coordinate with uniformed colleagues to disrupt activity and safeguard those at risk.

Priority Four - Fight Rural Crime

Question: The performance report refers to educating dog owners in relation to disturbance of animal stock. Can the PCC provide us with further data on number of reports and response?

Livestock worrying refers to the act of dogs chasing, attacking, or causing distress to farm animals such as sheep, cattle, goats and chicken. In the case of sheep there is no need for the dog to actually chase or attack, and it is an offence for the dog to be merely 'out of control' in the vicinity of sheep - this does not apply to other animals, there must be a chase or attack.

This behaviour can result in serious injuries or even death to the animals, and it often causes pregnant livestock to miscarry due to stress and this will impact the farmers future stock and income. Livestock Worrying is a criminal offence, and if dog owners are identified, positive action can have a positive rippling affect throughout the farming community.

As the Panel will know, my office co-ordinates, and I chair, the Dorset Partnership Against Rural Crime (PARC) which has members that represent the farming, livestock and wildlife community, including Forestry England, National Farmers Union, Cornish Mutual and NFU Mutual, Dorset Country Landowners Association (CLA), the Dorset Heath's Partnership and Dorset Dogs, Dorset Wildlife Trust. Through this we carry out awareness raising each year on the control of dogs and impact of livestock worrying. This is led by my communications team, particularly around the lambing and ground nesting birds season.

To ensure this issue remains at the forefront, the PARC has this subject as a reoccurring theme for discussion around action, prevention and comms. The PARC also has a communication calendar which is refreshed in April each year and has included awareness items at the beginning of each calendar year for these topics.

The comms has included, between January and March 2026, five separate news releases by my office and on the Dorset Country Watch website on:

- livestock worrying and dog control including Shaun the Sheep Countryside Code video & Force's Op Recall video
- ground nesting birds and Forestry England link
- and the law changes on livestock worrying

In addition to the above, we have supplied improved signage, such as the traffic light system signage on control of dogs on Forestry England sites.

The feedback from the PARC members is that the additional comms is a step in the right direction, but the reality remains that farmers and landowners are not always reporting incidents of livestock worrying, so there is concern that the true picture may not be fully known. Also, being a tourist area some visitors with dogs from more urban areas may not be aware of the impact. Hence the work by the PCC, Force, and PARC partners to increase awareness of both dog responsibility and reporting incidents to the police.

In terms of the data: In 2022/23, 27 offences, in 2023/24, 13, in 2024/25, 12, and in 2025/26, 8 offences.

Almost all of livestock worrying incidents are caused by out-of-control dogs. There has been a notable and positive reduction in reported livestock worrying incidents, measured using a

consistent methodology. I believe this improvement reflects the ongoing proactive work to raise awareness and promote responsible dog ownership in rural areas, as I have outlined.

From an enforcement side, I can also provide detail of outcomes since April 2026:

- 1 Conditional Caution issued to a dog owner, which included payment of the farmer's veterinary costs and adherence to specific conditions
- 1 Dog Behaviour Order granted through the courts, imposing strict control measures on both owner and dog
- 1 Dog Behaviour Contract implemented, setting clear expectations and conditions for the owner
- 1 Community Resolution

The legislation in relation to Dogs Worrying Livestock was updated in March 2026, and Dorset Police has updated its toolkit to ensure officers are aware of the changes.

The main change moves 'attack' from being within the definition of 'worrying' into its own separate category – of a dog 'attacking' or 'worrying' livestock. The location of where the offence can be committed has also been widened to include a road or a path in addition to any agricultural land.

Priority Five - Put Victim and Communities First

Question: Could details be given of data collected in relation to Op Ford? How many incidents have been logged in the last 12 months and is any action taken in relation to these cases other than recording the individual details?

Op Bridger was set up following the tragic murders of MPs Jo Cox and Sir David Ames.

Op Bridger is the UK policing's contribution to the safety and security of MPs while they are away from Parliament. This also includes all candidates in a General Election.

An Op Bridger incident is defined as any situation that has been reported by an MP, their staff, or their family where the police need to investigate if a crime has occurred, if the report constitutes intelligence that requires development, or if the incident requires a police response to mitigate any threat.

It applies to any act committed against themselves, their property, family or their constituency office staff, where it is reasonable to believe that the acts have been committed with the intention of intimidating or harassing the MP in connection with his or her official position.

Op Ford is the UK policing initiative aimed at strengthening the safety and security of local elected officials. This covers, for example, Unitary Authority Councillors, Police and Crime Commissioners and candidates for those roles.

It applies to any act committed against a serving elected official where it is reasonable to believe that the act has been committed with the intention of intimidating or harassing the elected officer or candidate in connection with their official position, or potential future position.

In terms of data, for Op Bridger there were 20 occurrences for 2025 and 8 so far in 2026.

These are incidents that are related directly to MPs, their homes/offices and family. The incidents range from an individual acting strangely outside of an office to a volume of emails being sent to an individual that amounts to harassment.

In terms of those who have attended Op Ford briefings on Personal Security:

In Dorset Council, 28 Cllrs attended and in BCP Council 29 Cllrs attended. The uptake is fairly low, but all Cllrs are offered the briefings on a regular basis.

Question: The effects of seasonality are happening in real time, with neighbourhood policing seemingly abstracted. How is this being quantified so that impacts on neighbourhood policing can be assessed? The intention from central government was that extra funding in neighbourhood policing should provide a dedicated resource. However in practice is this resource being abstracted to meet seasonal demands?

Chair, it might be helpful to start with a quick overview of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. This pledge is to fund 13,000 more neighbourhood officers (including police officers, PCSOs and special constables) in England and Wales by the end of this Parliamentary session, in 2029.

Based on our funding allocation, the Home Office has set Dorset Police a target to increase the numbers working in frontline neighbourhood policing roles by 40 police officers (FTE), 3 PCSOs (FTE), and 16 Specials (headcount), in year 1 and a further 15 officers in year 2. That is our share of the first 4,750 officers of the 13,000.

However, members will be well aware that Dorset Police, like most Forces, in order to maintain its numbers of police officers has relied on placing some of them in roles that have been traditionally carried out by police staff.

Therefore, the Chief Constable and I were very clear that rather than simply recruiting more officers and placing them in staff roles, as per the objective of the neighbourhood policing fund, we would also seek to recruit a number of police staff roles, to free up those officers currently undertaking those roles and to return them to the visible frontline – these roles includes police staff investigators (PSIs), detention officers, PCSOs, neighbourhood Specials and contact officers.

Members will note that this number of additional officers – whilst very welcome – is not sufficient to mitigate the impact of summer policing and ensure that the existing resources are not abstracted to manage this pressure.

Indeed, Dorset Police is already looking ahead, and with another bout of hot weather expected from Saturday 4 July until at least Sunday 12 July, is seeking officers to work overtime on days or lates over this period.

At the same time, Op Evolve continues. This is Dorset Police's ongoing work to maximise the resources available to it through a structured programme of carrying out performance and efficiency reviews, to prioritise steps to reduce waste, process, or bureaucracy, to make time and cash savings, and to find ways to improve our service to the public. To date, Op Evolve has delivered more in savings and efficiencies that has been received through the Neighbourhood Policing Fund, and therefore that will likely be the primary mechanism by which additional resources are found to further strengthened the frontline in the future.

Priority Six - Make Every Penny Count

Question: Can the PCC provide an update on those grant funding issues that were unclear at the time of the precept meeting?

Of course. All grant funding figures contained within the Budget Report in February have been fully confirmed and the funding position for 2026/27 is as set out in the report.

The main uncertainty in February was around the conditions of the ringfenced grant for Neighbourhood Policing and any penalties for not achieving the required increase in resources. These conditions have now been received and confirm that we need to maintain the additional 43 officers and PCSOs in neighbourhood policing from year 1 and the additional 15 officers from year 2 in order to receive the grant.

There are still 2 assessment points during the year – 30 September and 31 March but there are no penalties for missing the 30 September target, just a limit and delay in the amount of grant that can be claimed at that point. A loss of grant only applies if the target is missed at 31 March.

There are some really specific details about what does and doesn't count towards the target, the thresholds about what can be claimed and when, and the performance information which also has to be reported alongside the resource levels which are probably too much detail to go through now but my Treasurer can provide a briefing note setting out the full details for the panel after the meeting.

One issue which came to light after the Precept meeting, which has been resolved for 2026/27 but is currently impacting 2027/28, is around the grant funding for Regional Organised Crime Units.

Around a third of the funding for the South West ROCU comes from a Home Office grant. This grant disappeared from the 2026/27 settlement and the Home Office later confirmed that they would no longer be providing the grant. Given the significant timing of this announcement, i.e. after most budgets had been set, a one off grant has been provided for the current year from Home Office underspends but no further funding will be provided.

The potential impacts of this decision are being highlighted to the Home Office on a national basis, whilst the SWROCU is working through how this can be mitigated for next year but this could be an additional pressure for the 2027/28 budget.

Question: The absence rates for officers is noted. Can the PCC provide detail of the impacts across the force and the extent that the impacts are on particular age profiles/demographics/roles? How closely are the drivers for absence being assessed and what prevention measures are taken to the key issues identified? As a point of clarity, do these absence rates include PCSOs?

Headline figures for absence are given as this is a strategic dashboard rather than a performance report. It should be noted that the primary accountability structure for scrutinising Dorset Police performance is the Monthly Force Performance Board, which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and attended by my Chief Executive.

This board receives detailed breakdowns of officer and staff absence – both short and long term, plus statistics on the number of people on restricted duties or adjusted duties, the numbers being supported through occupational health services, and much more – including the reasons for absence.

On that basis, I do not suggest that we seek to add in additional statistics at the time but instead continue to focus on the work being undertaken by my office to hold the force to account for its performance.

You will remember that last July, the Director of Operations wrote a paper on Staff Health and Wellbeing, and I commend that paper to those who would not have had the opportunity to hear it being discussed.

That paper stated that, overall, the data at that time showed that Dorset Police's level of long-term sickness absence was higher than the national average, for both officers and staff – 2.5% of the workforce on average, as opposed to 2% of the workforce on average nationally.

At the time, however, we also noted that when considering these figures – in terms of numbers, this rate represented 37 officers and 32 staff on long-term sickness. For these numbers to align with the national average this would equate to only seven fewer officers and seven fewer staff returning from sickness absence.

The paper also highlighted the delay in officers and staff received support from the internal occupational health service, and how that was exacerbating absence rates. The Gold group that had been stood up to address these issues was also mentioned, along with a range of supporting initiatives.

Whilst the data are highlighted red in the quarterly report for the period of January to March of this year, I am pleased to report that this sickness absence figure has since returned to a more acceptable level, and the Gold group has been stood down. Members will therefore see this statistic improve in subsequent quarterly reports.