



POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER 2026

Present: Cllrs Alasdair Keddie (Chair), Cameron Adams, Patrick Canavan, David Flagg, Simon Gibson, Louie O'Leary, Peter Sidaway, Sarah Williams and Carl Woode

Apologies: Cllrs Louise Bown

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), Megan Rochester (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), David Sidwick (Police and Crime Commissioner), Julie Strange (OPCC Chief Finance Officer) and Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice)

13. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 2nd July 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

14. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

15. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

16. Q4 Monitoring Report 2026/27 (01:55:59 on the recording)

The Police and Crime Commissioner provided an update on progress against the priorities. He highlighted the continued success of the Relentless Community Fund, which had supported a further 11 projects, bringing the total to 53 projects across Dorset, and contributing to efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour.

The Commissioner welcomed proposed changes to crime and policing legislation, including measures relating to drug testing on arrest and vehicle seizure, although he emphasised the need for additional funding. He reported a 4% reduction in burglaries and highlighted work to tackle fraud, particularly scams targeting young, elderly and vulnerable people, including the introduction of call-blocking technology.

Dorset Police remained within the top quarter of forces for solved crime rates. Operation Shopkeeper was highlighted as achieving a 65% monthly solve rate, with one case progressing from offence to resolution within eight hours. While 999 call performance remained below the desired level, 101 triage times had reduced.

The Commissioner noted an increase in domestic abuse offences and recognised that further work was required. Activity relating to stalking, substance misuse and knife crime was also highlighted, including support for National Stalking Awareness Week, the Forget Ket campaign and increased referrals into treatment. Knife crime in Dorset had continued to fall.

Rural crime had also continued to decrease, with work undertaken to tackle fly-tipping, hare coursing and poaching. This included partnership working with neighbouring forces and the trialling of covert cameras in hotspot areas. The Commissioner had also responded to the consultation on banning trail hunting.

The number of victims receiving support and levels of victim satisfaction had increased. The Commissioner concluded by reiterating his commitment to seeking further funding for policing in Dorset.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority one – Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (02:06:50 on the recording).

- Can the PCC provide an update on how Op Relentless community grants have been awarded, the impacts for communities and how success is monitored?
- It is positive to see that the KSI indicator has shown improvement having been reported as red for some time. Can the PCC provide some clarity and context behind this improvement?
- Can the PCC provide some further information and background to the Call Blocker pilot

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (02:07:17 on the recording) and at appendix 1.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority two – Make Policing More Visible and Connected (02:21:54 on the recording).

- It's disappointing to see that the 101-answer time has slipped but appreciating that the triage time is positive. Could the PCC explain the factors behind this deterioration, and what he is doing to try and improve performance, within the current resourcing restraints?
- Can the PCC give any early indications on the impacts that summer policing has had, and the impacts on neighbourhoods from abstraction
- The monitoring report does not make any mention of Op Track high visibility patrols. Can the PCC advise on current performance, how the data is used and what it is showing us?
- Queried whether the app previously used as part of the Home Office project to track activity within specific areas was still in use and whether this data could be used to quantify activity within individual areas.
- It was acknowledged that hotspot patrols had continued; however, concerns were raised that their visibility within communities had

reduced. The Commissioner was asked whether data was available to demonstrate to residents the level of hotspot patrol activity taking place.

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (02:23:03 on the recording) and at appendix 1.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority three – Fight Violent Crime and High Harm (02:44:00 on the recording).

- There have been several knife crime incidents recently that have been reported in the press, and it seems to be a continuing issue even if the overall numbers are low. I would like to understand what data is being kept and how this is being monitored

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (02:44:30 on the 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 four – Cut Fight Rural Crime (02:56:33 on the recording)

- What impact does the winter months and increased hours of darkness have on rural crime. If this presents a higher risk, how does the PCC satisfy himself that there are appropriate preparation and response by the force?
- Can the PCC provide some further information on what heritage watch, its level of engagement? Is the figure of 138 people; organisations etc) and its spread geographically?
- The Commissioner was asked whether consideration was also given to protecting heritage within built-up areas, as well as rural communities.

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (02:57:04 on the recording) and at appendix 1.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority five – Put Victim and Communities First (03:04:38 on the recording).

- There seems to have been some debate nationally about early release from prison for certain types of offenders. I wondered if the PCC had held any meetings with relevant partners regarding this and whether this was having any impact on resources
- Some neighbourhood policing areas are experiencing a high turnover of senior posts, such as inspectors. What oversight does the PCC have, and how does he hold the CC to account?

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (03:05:42 on the recording) and at appendix 1.

Questions from the Priority leads and Panel Members for Priority six – Make Every Penny Count (03:16:16 on the recording).

- Can the PCC provide an update on the lobbying efforts to achieve a fairer funding deal for Dorset?
- I note that in the Q1 report we seem to be around £1m adrift in terms of employment costs and I wondered what steps are being taken to address this
- At the time of the precept, there remained some funding uncertainties. Can the PCC provide an update as to whether these uncertainties are now clearer, and the impacts on the financial position?

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (03:16:41 on the recording) and at appendix 1.

17. **Hate Crime and Hate Incidents (00:04:17 on the recording)**

The Commissioner emphasised that hate crimes were crimes first and highlighted the significant and lasting impact they could have on victims, including loss of confidence, social isolation and an increased sense of vulnerability. It was noted that 937 hate crimes had been recorded in Dorset during the previous year, with increases in racial and religious hate crime.

The Panel was advised that tackling hate crime remained a priority within the Police and Crime Plan, with a range of activity underway to improve outcomes for victims and communities. This included engagement with schools and communities, Operation Hampshire, the introduction of hate crime review panels and the Victim Champion. Support was also available through services commissioned by the OPCC, while review panels considered victims' experiences to help identify opportunities for improvement.

The Commissioner highlighted the importance of increasing confidence in reporting and making the process as accessible as possible, including through third-party reporting centres. Although recorded hate crime in Dorset had remained relatively stable, it was recognised that this only reflected incidents reported to the police. Further work would therefore continue around community engagement, communication, victim support and the development of hate crime review arrangements.

Questions and comments from the members on the report (00:18:23 on the recording)

- Cllr Keddie commended the report, particularly its insight into frontline officers' experiences and the Force's willingness to reflect on its own practices. He emphasised the importance of Dorset Police setting the highest standards in addressing institutional racism.
- The Hate Crime report provided a lot of detail about traditional Hate Crimes but does not cover the mass immigration protests we have seen over recent weeks, nationally and more specifically locally, at the RNLI headquarters in Poole.
- Concern was expressed for staff and volunteers, with support sought for measures to protect them.
- What is Dorset's approach to other coordinated actions that can amplify community tensions, such as the erecting of flags on street furniture and other public assets?

- It was questioned whether the same advice would be provided to someone displaying a fete sign as to a member of the public displaying the national flag.
- It is noted that reported incidents remain stable. How confident is the PCC that the number of incidents reported reflect the actual position, and how is the PCC engaging with hard-to-reach groups to improve reporting.
- The PCC was thanked for engaging with communities, particularly younger people who may mistrust the police, and the work undertaken was welcomed.
- How does the OPCC and Dorset Police focus resourcing on proactive monitoring social media to understand community tensions and calls to action by known groups?
- Clarification was sought on how intelligence was recorded, both online and offline, and how hate incidents were defined where the threshold for a crime had not been met. The Commissioner's strong approach to tackling hate crime was welcomed.
- Referring to section 3 of the report, clarification was sought on whether the Safer Schools and Communities Team initiative was funded and whether further school visits were planned in Poole and Bournemouth North, which had been identified as areas of concern

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (00:21:01 on the recording) and at appendix 1.

18. **Illegal E-Mobility Vehicles (00:50:46 on the recording)**

The Panel received a report on Illegal E-Mobility Vehicles, which outlined the increasing national and local concern surrounding non-compliant e-bikes, e-scooters and other e-mobility vehicles. Members were advised that their speed, quiet operation and difficulty in identification presented operational challenges for Dorset Police, while also generating additional demand through enforcement, seizures, investigations and hotspot patrols.

The Commissioner highlighted the importance of a partnership and intelligence-led approach, including preventative activity such as Operation THINK, intelligence sharing and targeted activity in hotspot areas. Reference was also made to the trialling of forensic tagging spray to assist with identifying individuals linked to illegal e-bikes, and the need to continue making representations to Government regarding improved identification of e-bikes and e-scooters.

Questions and comments from the members on the report (01:04:10 on the recording)

- The report highlights that there is currently no reliable data on the true scale of illegal e-mobility use, with most measures based on seizures and reported incidents. How will the PCC develop a more robust evidence base and what outcomes or performance measures will be used to determine whether interventions are reducing the problem rather than simply increasing enforcement activity?

- A suggestion was made to introduce a mapping-based reporting system to identify where and when crimes were occurring and assist in identifying hotspots and emerging trends.
- The report describes illegal e-mobility as a growing source of demand on Dorset Police, requiring enforcement, investigations, hotspot patrols and community reassurance. What assessment has the PCC made of the future resource implications for neighbourhood policing, and how will this be balanced against other policing priorities if the trend continues to grow?
- Can the PCC provide an update on the effectiveness of Op Think and the use forensic sprays?
- Cllr Keddie welcomed the use of forensic sprays and sought clarification on whether there were any barriers to their wider use within, and beyond, the pilot areas.
- What is the PCC and force's strategy on the use of drones and how can they be deployed to support the work in combating illegal e-mobility vehicles? What capability of drones do we have within the force?
- The report was welcomed, and clarification was sought on the Commissioner's position regarding the current law and the level of penalties for the use of privately owned e-scooters.
- Clarification was sought on whether registration requirements should extend to other road users, including cyclists.

Follow on panel questions and responses from PCC (01:05:48 on recording) and at appendix 1.

19. Complaints Update (03:30:07 on the recording)

The Panel received an update on complaints received since the previous meeting. Marc Eyre, Service Manager for Assurance, advised that one complaint was currently under investigation.

20. Forward Workplan (03:30:31 on the recording)

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

21. Urgent items

There were no urgent items

22. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business

Police & Crime Panel Questions 01.10.2026

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am

Chairman

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Police & Crime Panel Questions

Agenda Item 6: Hate Crime and Hate Incidents

Question: The Hate Crime report provides a lot of detail about traditional Hate Crimes but does not cover the immigration protests we have seen over recent weeks, nationally and more specifically locally, at the RNLI headquarters in Poole. Can the PCC tell us how Dorset approach policing these protests where there are masked protestors shouting racial abuse towards immigrants and protestors on the other side? We understand that arrests are often not made at the time in order to stop protests from boiling over, but can the PCC tell us whether there are follow up arrests after the event?

Dorset Police is part of the national Operation Velocite, which has been stood up by the National Police Coordination Centre (NPoCC) to manage the public order and public safety operation to assess the risk posed by the activities of individuals and groups linked to the direct-action protest group, Patriot Platform.

Strategic protest activity is considered likely to involve protest groups or campaigns which have the potential to engage in criminal activity linked to protest on a national or multi-regional scale. Additionally, nationally policing recognises that strategic protest will have the potential to impact policing in one or more of the following ways, by:

- Significantly affecting community tensions
- Attracting significant counter protest
- Causing a significant adverse impact on the local or national economy
- Requiring the deployment of significant police resources

Here in Dorset, as highlighted in the question, demonstrations have taken place recently.

Learning from the Dover and Portsmouth protest has been disseminated through Op Velocite, and policing is now in a position where a proactive position around restricting the use of face coverings will be used. A range of police powers exists to enable this.

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 brought in a new criminal offence of 'concealing identity at a protest' on 29 June this year. This strengthens the previous legislation which criminalised the act of concealing identity when in an area that the police have designated. As a designation can only be made in relation to an area where a protest may or is taking place, the previous legislation therefore allowed individuals to move to a different area and then put their face covering back on.

The Act also criminalises the act of wearing a face covering, as opposed to criminalising the act of refusing to remove the face covering when legitimately asked to do so by an officer (as set out in Section 60AA of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994).

Regarding arrests, it is correct to say that during mass protests policing can opt to focus on deescalation, containment and keeping the rival groups apart in order to preserve public and officer safety.

Question: What is Dorset's approach to other coordinated actions that can amplify community tensions, such as the erecting of flags on street furniture and other public assets?

Under the Highways Act it is an offence to attach unauthorised items to a highway structure (such as a lamppost, railing or bridge) without the explicit consent of the landowner or local authority. Perpetrators can face fines up to £2,500, or more should the cost of taking down the illegal display exceed that figure.

The initial removal of items from public street furniture (such as lampposts, railings, and bridges) is a civil matter for local authorities or highways agencies, not the police, and I support the Councils' consistent enforcement of this, regardless of the content or the symbolism of the item.

I have spoken about the challenge of achieving this with both local authority leaders given that council staff both in Dorset and across the country have faced threats from members of the public simply for seeking to remedy these illegal acts.

Dorset Police will and does provide operational support to council workers tasked with removing flags. I am aware that conversations about this have taken place between local police commanders and council officials, and I support this approach.

Question: It is noted that reported incidents remain stable. How confident is the PCC that the number of incidents reported reflect the actual position, and how is the PCC engaging with hard to reach groups to improve reporting.

According to the most recent Crime Survey of England and Wales, victims of hate crime were more likely than victims of all CSEW headline crime to say they were emotionally affected by the incident - 92% for hate crime and 75% for all crime.

Likewise, victims of hate crime report that they are more likely to be 'very much' affected than victims of crime overall - 39% for hate crime, and 14% for all crime.

Almost twice as many victims of hate crime said they had suffered a loss of confidence or had felt vulnerable after the incident (44%), compared with all victims of all CSEW headline crime (24%).

As a result, and despite the very significant range of number of improvements outlined in the paper, it remains that the number of hate crimes and hate incidents reported to the police does not accurately reflect the true position.

I will continue to engage with all communities regularly.

Question: How does the OPCC and Dorset Police focus resourcing on proactive monitoring social media to understand community tensions and calls to action by known groups?

Much of this work is done nationally, as policing focuses resourcing on proactive social media monitoring through a structured approach that blends national intelligence units, advanced data analytics software, and integrated multi-agency local frameworks that combine local and regional policing.

NPoCC, the National Police Coordination Centre referred to in my answer to Cllr Sidaway, contains the National Internet Intelligence Investigations Team, a capability that spots early indicators of civil unrest and community tension by scanning mainstream and alternative social platforms, and filtering and grading material to flag high-risk nationally significant threats directly to regional police commands.

This unit was set up following recommendations falling out of the Summer 2024 riots and it is specifically charged with overcoming fragmented local and regional intelligence to give policing a clear national picture and strategic intelligence briefing.

Locally Dorset Police, like other forces, operates under the National Intelligence Model code of practice, meaning that all potential intelligence gathered by staff and officers is structured and codified through a series of processes set out in the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice before it is deemed to meet the required standards and can be actioned, or otherwise promulgated.

Intelligence received or observed by OPCC is fed into the Force through a variety of mechanisms, typically by sharing the material directly with Chief Officers, or through established joint meetings between the comms and engagement leads and staff of both the Force and OPCC, which occur weekly.

Agenda Item 7: Illegal E-Mobility Vehicles

Question: The report highlights that there is currently no reliable data on the true scale of illegal e-mobility use, with most measures based on seizures and reported incidents. How will the PCC or police develop a more robust evidence base and what outcomes or performance measures will be used to determine whether interventions are actually reducing the problem rather than simply increasing enforcement activity?

I, along with the Force, recognise that seizure and incident data alone cannot tell us the true scale of illegal e-mobility use, nor whether enforcement is reducing the underlying problem. And, I'll repeat what I have said numerous times before that there needs to be a change in legislation and regulation, as well as to the attitudes of those using these vehicles and, in many cases, the attitudes of parents.

The broader evidence base starts with Neighbourhood Policing Teams working within communities to identify concerns, emerging trends and hotspots. Where a significant problem is identified, teams can use established tasking processes to secure additional resources. This has previously brought together the roads policing unit, the drone team, Camera Safety Partnership, Road Casualty Reduction officers and others to deliver coordinated enforcement and prevention activity, as demonstrated through bespoke operations.

The key distinction is between measuring activity and measuring impact. Seizures, stops and enforcement outcomes tell us what the police have done; they do not, on their own, tell us whether the problem has reduced. We therefore need to assess interventions against indicators such as repeat incidents, persistence or displacement of hotspots, community intelligence and feedback, and associated safety and antisocial-behaviour concerns. Over time, that broader intelligence picture will allow us to judge whether interventions are delivering a sustained reduction in the problem.

Question: The report describes illegal e-mobility as a growing source of demand on Dorset Police, requiring enforcement, investigations, hotspot patrols and community reassurance. What assessment has the PCC made of the future resource implications for neighbourhood policing, and how will this be balanced against other policing priorities if the trend continues to grow?

Tackling illegal e-mobility is seen as a whole Force issue rather than solely a Neighbourhood policing issue. Identification of hotspots, community reassurance and preventative patrols are a Neighbourhood Police function, however as detailed in my previous response, the Neighbourhood Policing Teams have access to tasking processes and support for enforcement and wider prevention activity.

Chair, the Force is confident that, with the recent uplift in Neighbourhood Police Officers through the Neighbourhood Police Guarantee, the demand will be able to be absorbed into daily business.

Question: What is the PCC and force's strategy on the use of drones and how can they be deployed to support the work in combating illegal e-mobility vehicles? What capability of drones do we have within the force?

This is an interesting question. The Force has a good level of Drone capability, however there is more that can be done in this space and I have already asked the Force for a fuller briefing on not only the current position, but also how the SW can take advantage of emerging technologies.

Staying focussed on E-mobility, however, there is a dedicated Drone Team and pilots within other specialist departments, with the Force having the capacity to respond to live incidents and the capability to deal with pre-planned enforcement action. Indeed, during previous enforcement work the Force has used the Drone capability to effectively monitor activity, identify offences and tackle the illegal use of e-mobility vehicles.

Of course, I do need to sound a note of caution, however, which is to say that there are various restrictions on the use of drones – including the need to maintain line of sight – which does limit their utility in urban environments.

Agenda Item 5: Quarterly Monitoring Report 2026/27

Priority One - Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Question: Can the PCC provide an update on how Op Relentless community grants have been awarded, the impacts for communities and how success is monitored?

In terms of the awards process, my commissioning team co-ordinates the evaluation process to ensure that it is fair and proportionate. Members of the OPCC are selected to be part of the evaluation panel, and to read and evaluate the applications against a pre-determined scoring framework that considers areas such as the project scope, impact, deliverability, beneficiaries, and geographical coverage. The evaluation panel each score independently and then come together to moderate scores and come to a consensus. Once a consensus is reached, the scores and recommendations are made to myself for further scrutiny and for final decision, at which point the successful applicants are confirmed.

With regards to the impact and success, each funded project has its own outputs and outcomes which are agreed through the process to ascertain, as best we can, whether the scheme has been a success. These outcomes are collected as part of the end-of-grant process. I also often take the opportunity to visit grant recipients to see firsthand the good work being delivered and speak with the beneficiaries to gather their views on the scheme and the impact.

I do appreciate that a lot of the grant recipients are volunteers, doing this work and the applications in their own spare time to benefit the community they live in. Therefore, my office and I understand the outcomes are not always as informative as our larger commissioned services, and often include soft outcomes rather than facts (i.e. people's feelings or perception of the benefit). These outcomes still provide a great insight to how well the scheme has been run and impacted the community it served. Equally, I am sure that members will appreciate that, with any small grant scheme, there needs to be a sense of proportion – we wouldn't want to spend many thousands of pounds evaluating a project that might have only received £1500 in the first place, nor would we want to put in place a process so onerous that it would prove too costly in terms of resources to the recipients.

Overall, feedback and the reach of the scheme has been positive, with smaller areas receiving benefit from funding that otherwise may not have come, while also offering the opportunity for communities to take ownership and drive improvements in their area to reduce crime or the fear/perception of crime. I am proud that this scheme has, as the report highlights, awarded £210,000 to a total of 53 projects all over the county.

It is positive to see that the KSI indicator has shown improvement having been reported as red for sometime. Can the PCC provide some clarity and context behind this improvement?

Chair, I am pleased to note that the Q1 data indicates the third successive quarter that KSI (Killed or Seriously Injured) casualty figures have fallen in Dorset. This number currently sits below the three-year mean, albeit ever-so-slightly-higher than the position two years ago.

Members will recall that around a year ago, the 2025 Q1 figures showed a sharp increase which had been caused by a rise in serious casualties, despite a slight decrease in fatalities. In part, this came about because of an updated national process that captured more detailed injury information, automatically assigning severity levels and reducing reliance on police officer judgment and statistical adjustments. Dorset implemented the new process in March 2025.

As you know, the increase in casualty figures has been monitored at the Dorset Strategic Road Safety Partnership (DSRSP) meeting, where the Road Safety Team has undertaken detailed work to better understand the data. I am pleased to see that this work appears to already be having an impact.

Question: Can the PCC provide some further information and background to the Call Blocker pilot?

One of the priorities in my Police and Crime Plan is Putting Victims and Communities First, which includes a commitment to protect older people who may be particularly susceptible to fraud and scams. In support of this priority, I funded the Call Blocker pilot to help protect older and vulnerable residents across Dorset from telephone fraud and nuisance calls.

To date, 31 call blocker units have been installed across Dorset by trained, DBS-checked volunteers. Monitoring of devices showed that they had already blocked 1,962 nuisance calls and an estimated three scams. Over their operational lifetime, these units are projected to prevent around 30 scams and more than 18,000 nuisance calls, including over 5,000 scam attempts.

I am pleased that feedback from recipients has been positive, with individuals reporting increased reassurance, wellbeing, and quality of life. The project has also provided opportunities for Age UK to connect vulnerable residents with wider support, including welfare benefits advice and home safety checks.

Referral levels have been lower than anticipated, despite promotion by Age UK, Dorset Police and my Office. Factors include the declining use of landlines and the understandable caution of previous scam victims about allowing someone into their home to install the equipment.

My office and I will continue to promote the scheme through community engagement, newsletters, and partner networks, including recent engagement with Dorset Council Social Housing managers, to increase awareness and encourage further referrals.

Priority Two - Make Policing More Visible and Connected

Question: It's disappointing to see that the 101 answer time has slipped, but appreciating that the triage time is positive. Could the PCC explain the factors behind this deterioration, and what he is doing to try and improve performance, within the current the resourcing restraints?

Balancing the emergency call, non-emergency call and online demand continues to be a challenge. I continue to be fully briefed and am happy to outline the position.

In late May, the decision was taken to provide additional support to the Contact Management function via a gold group structure. The Force's demand levels at the time had increased consistently over the previous several weeks and despite concerted efforts to maintain performance, it had become clear that an additional effort was required. In the short term, a decision was taken to carry forward underspend from the 2025/26 departmental budget into the 2026/27 budget to allow additional agency staff to be employed to support the 101-triage function, with a new fast-track option for friends and family who may be interested in short-term opportunities, such as those returning from university for the summer.

During June, a further suite of initiatives were taken to mitigate the increasing demand, these included:

- Allocating initial crime tasking to officers not based in response teams – these includes specialist teams such as firearms, roads policing, rural crime, marine team, as well as in safeguarding functions.
- Bringing in staff from other units to work through the SOH queues while upskilling officers on ensuring our investigation standard levels remain high.
- Deploying further officers and staff into contact and extending the triage desk opening times
- Successfully introducing a new 101 telephony software, which will be followed in due course by a queue buster, remote working ability and email integration.

However, the demand kept on coming and by July:

- emergency calls reached a peak of 4189 calls – a 45 per cent increase on last year,
- at the same time, the non-emergency 101 call volume also hit a record high, and
- just shy of 200 emails per day were also received into the Single Online Home queue – far higher than the average 165-170.

Whilst other Forces, particularly those along the South coast had experienced increases in demand, our levels of calls for service appear to have remained higher than normal for a longer period.

Responding to this unprecedented demand continued to require a whole Force effort, and slowly, throughout August the position began to stabilise as the initiatives I've mentioned started to take hold, and a further tranche of technology and systems improvements were rolled out, including a new system that allows 101 callers to explain the reason for their call in natural language, and to redirect the around 20% of calls that come into 101 but are not for policing to the appropriate agency, before placing the calls for policing in a queue.

In September the calls for service started to reduce week by week, and the Force was able to transition back to a more business-as-usual position in the contact centre.

As a result, 999 answer times are returning to their usual position of 90% being answered in 10 seconds (currently, 88.1% for the last 30 days) and our abandonment rate has also fallen to 11.6% as of last week.

In terms of staffing, last week we welcomed 15 new joiners to the contact management team, supporting the friends and family triage staff who took up our recent offer to join us on ad-hoc relief contracts, and the new agency staff also landing with us.

This has allowed the officers and staff who were brought into support Contact Management to step back into their primary roles. I would like to put on record my thanks to each and every person who has supported Contact Management in recent months – they have demonstrated the whole Force ethos that is so important and come together as a single team to support colleagues and the service the force provides to the people of Dorset.

Question: Can the PCC give any early indications on the impacts that summer policing has had, and the impacts on neighbourhoods from abstraction?

It is a little too early to say as that review work is yet to complete. However, at a high level, my previous answer demonstrates the significant knock-on effect that we must manage every year.

Every year, our hard-working officers, staff and volunteers pause their training, defer annual leave and take up extra hours all to keep the people who live, work and visit Dorset safe.

We also postpone systems upgrades and replacements, as well as necessary estates maintenance, all of which create gaps elsewhere that must be backfilled and addressed during the remainder of the year.

I am happy to report back to the Panel when the impacts of the summer policing effort are more fully evaluated.

Question: *The monitoring report does not make any mention of Op Track high visibility patrols. Can the PCC advise on current performance, how the data is used and what it is showing us?*

The national Hotspot Action Fund officially concluded in March 2026. This funded Op Track, including the expansion of hotspot patrols beyond Bournemouth and Weymouth into places such as Dorchester, Blandford, Swanage and Wimborne. Dorset received £1m for 2025/26, supporting around 9,000 additional patrol hours.

The Government rationale was that hotspot patrolling was being moved from being a discrete, centrally funded project into mainstream neighbourhood policing/business as usual, particularly in the context of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.

However, the Force is still utilising this intelligence-led and data-driven way of working, with hotspot patrols taking place as part of Operation Nightjar and Operation Nighthawk to target public place violence and ASB in the night-time economy.

Hotspot patrols also played a vital role in the Force's Good Safe Summer campaign, tackling violence, ASB and helping manage increased summer demand in locations like Bournemouth beach and pier, Weymouth town centre and seafront, and other locations popular with tourists.

Operational delivery and performance management of hotspot policing and other patrols activities sits with the Neighbourhood Policing Team Chief Inspectors for the two local policing areas.

Priority Three - Fight Violent Crime and High Harm

Question: There have been a number of knife crime incidents recently that have been reported in the press and it seems to be a continuing issue even if the overall numbers are low. I would like to understand what data is being kept and how this is being monitored.

Thank you for acknowledging that Dorset has low number of knife crimes. In fact, the most recently published national (ONS) data reported that Dorset Police has the lowest recorded rate of knife crime among all police forces in England and Wales.

Of course, this doesn't mean there should be any complacency around knife carrying and knife-related offending and, therefore, tackling knife crime remains a priority and Op Guardian is our overarching approach to doing this.

The operation combines efforts to remove knives from the streets, with a focus on prevention among young people. We use targeted multi-agency interventions designed to disrupt and divert young people from current or future involvement in knife crime. The aim is to:

- firstly, identify high risk knife carrying nominals,
- secondly, devise and deliver a multi-agency response to alter their behaviour and
- thirdly, to thereby reduce the risk of knife carrying by that individual.

We also continue to work with schools and education establishments across the county to deliver Firearms and Knife Education (FAKE) presentations to young people, helping to bust the myth that carrying a knife makes them safer.

Another project jointly developed by the OPCC and Dorset Police under Op Guardian is our 'Skills 4 Safer Streets' event. This is delivered jointly with fire service and local authority partners, for children at local schools. It combines the teaching of unarmed defensive skills – so martial arts – and educational sessions on knife crime.

Again, our ultimate aim with this event is to prevent children from carrying knives or entering the criminal justice system, initially by offering them the confidence to defend themselves without relying on a knife, and by also highlighting the life changing consequences of carrying a knife, or having one used against you.

Dorset Police operates a tightly controlled approach to disrupting knife carrying. NPT Sergeants risk assess individuals consider their risk of carrying a knife, and the risk of harm posed to the individual and to others. Dependent on the result, individuals are selected to be included in a Knife Carrying Nominal tracker.

These nominals are actively managed by police leads within each local authority area. Local authority area leads report quarterly to a Tactical Knife Crime Meeting, which is chaired by the Force Knife Crime Lead and attended by representatives from partner agencies, including the OPCC, local authorities and Youth Justice Services. This provides a multi-agency forum for reviewing intelligence, sharing information and coordinating activity to reduce knife-related harm.

In terms of other data, Dorset Police maintains comprehensive monitoring arrangements for knife-related offending. The Force Knife Crime Lead receives regular performance reports covering both offences involving the use of a knife and knife possession offences. Trends and changes in these datasets are routinely reviewed, and where increases or emerging concerns are identified, further analysis is undertaken to understand the causes and inform an appropriate response.

Beyond police monitoring arrangements, my Office supports a partnership approach to tackling knife crime as a form of serious violence. Community Safety Partnerships receive Serious Violence Duty funding through the OPCC, and I provide additional investment in this area through my Violence Reduction and Prevention Team. Working alongside local authorities, health partners, probation services, Youth Justice Services and other key agencies, information and intelligence relating to knife crime is shared to develop a collective understanding of local risks and to coordinate preventative activity.

During the current financial year, both Serious Violence Duty and OPCC funding have been used to deliver interventions aimed at preventing knife crime and reducing the risk of serious violence across Dorset. The Force also participates in Sceptre weeks of action.

Priority Four - Fight Rural Crime

Question: Can the PCC provide some further information on what heritage watch, its level of engagement? [Is the figure of 138 people organisations etc] and its spread geographically?

I launched the Heritage Watch scheme in Dorset as a result of my engagement with the public and, in particular, rural communities and members will know that it is included in my Police and Crime Plan.

Heritage watch is a scheme to connect the police, Local Authorities, Historic England, and specialist agencies, with residents of Dorset to identify issues at scheduled landmarks or protected buildings. Its aim is to drive down incidents of heritage crime. The scheme itself is run through Dorset Alert and provides members with key information about crime types that may affect heritage sites in Dorset, what to look out for, and a platform for reporting crime and concerns.

In Dorset there are approximately 10,500 listed buildings, monuments, and heritage sites, so it seems right that there is a scheme to try and protect these buildings and land.

The 138 figure provided is predominantly individuals but may also include organisations. I don't currently have detailed information regarding the geographical spread to hand but will explore what further information is available with my Office. I am happy to say that the number has grown since Q1, with the current figure being upward of 250 members. I think this evidences a drive by the Force to share information, but also shows a willingness for members of the public to engage in a scheme of this type.

I, alongside my office and the Force, will continue to champion the scheme to drive membership up and improve information sharing. There is currently work ongoing to design and print bespoke Heritage Crime leaflets that can be shared with partners and members of the public to raise awareness and increase membership.

Question: What impact does the winter months and increased hours of darkness have on rural crime. If this presents a higher risk, how does the PCC satisfy himself that there is appropriate preparation and response by the force?

Thank you for the question. Firstly, my office and I regularly engage with police senior leadership and also directly with the Rural Crime Team to seek assurance that the Force understands the seasonal risks affecting rural communities and has proportionate plans in place to prevent crime, support victims and respond effectively to emerging threats. This oversight and scrutiny ensure that the focus on this key area remains.

The winter months and increased hours of darkness certainly do present additional challenges for rural communities and can contribute to an elevated risk of certain crime types.

Both Dorset Police and my office recognise that offences such as poaching, hare coursing, rural theft, and acquisitive crimes targeting isolated farms, barns, outbuildings, and machinery can become more prevalent during this period. The remote nature of many rural locations, coupled with reduced natural surveillance, can create opportunities for offenders. Intelligence indicates that these crime types are often interconnected, with offenders involved in wildlife crime also engaged in wider criminality, including theft and organised acquisitive offending.

In recognition of these seasonal risks, Dorset Police has developed a winter rural crime plan which focuses on hotspot locations, proactive intelligence-led patrol activity, and the monitoring of known offenders. The approach reinforces the principle that tackling rural crime

is a force-wide responsibility, bringing together Neighbourhood Policing Teams, Response officers, Operational Support resources and specialist Rural Crime Team officers to prevent, deter and disrupt offending.

More broadly, rural crime activity is coordinated through Operation Ragwort, which incorporates seasonal threat assessments and operational planning. Dorset Police works closely with regional policing partners, sharing intelligence, identifying cross-border offenders, and conducting joint enforcement activity to address emerging issues. This collaborative approach recognises that many rural offenders are mobile and operate across force boundaries.

Priority Five - Put Victim and Communities First

Question: There seems to have been some debate nationally (and arguably mixed messages) about early release from prison for certain types of offenders. I wondered if the PCC had held any meetings with relevant partners regarding this and whether this was having any impact on resources?

Yes Chair, I have held various meetings with partners – indeed, I chaired a meeting of the Dorset Criminal Justice Board last week where this very issue was discussed. The national response to this issue is called Op Redford and Dorset Police are part of the national Gold Group, with a Gold structure in Force.

Members will be aware of the early release of prisoners and there has been much media commentary on the subject and well-publicised changes to the scheme. For members of the public watching on, I think it's important to reiterate that exclusions do apply and that this scheme is not open to anyone convicted of the following offences:

- *manslaughter/homicide*
- *child cruelty and child destruction offences*
- *most penetrative adult sexual offences*
- *indecent images of children offences*
- *death by dangerous driving/riding offences*
- *dangerous dog offences*
- *and most child sexual offences*

Now, the early prison releases won't begin until later this month, and work is still ongoing to calculate the number of prisoners being released in future tranches – what I can say, however, is that Dorset expects a very low volume across the duration of the programme.

All nominals who are part of the early release are identified in advance to police, who have a review process to check the names and details so that a bespoke risk assessment is carried out. Anyone who may be at high risk of offending is identified and flagged for monitoring. An early release panel is being formed to manage those people across neighbourhood policing teams and via the Force High Harm Team.

The uplift in resources for the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee has been built by using crime profiles, trends and harm offending hotspots. This includes identifying the nominals responsible for the highest harm offending in the community – which will include those currently committing offences and those about to be released from prison. The uplift means that the NPTs have increased resourcing in those areas to match these crime trend profiles.

I am advised that there have been some mild increases in demand associated with increased arrest volumes for people on a recall to prison, or for warrant arrests from court, such as failing to appear. This trend was already present across the long term but appears to have increased because of the Act. The impact is currently mild and manageable.

That said there are risks that could impact resourcing. Namely:

- Increased use of electronic tagging and exclusion zones. There will be an increase in breaches associated to the increase in use, which will require arrest.
- The changes to the community supervision of offenders reduces the burden on probation services for checking compliance with license conditions in the last third

of the nominal sentence and essentially transfers this to police. This will need to be built into the NPG programme and will take police resources.

- The national estimate of costs to policing caused by this legislation is £500 million. This figure will be quoted in national releases. Broadly speaking, this correlates to the overall investment in time across every force in building responses, the cost of increased arrest rates, the cost of managing an increase in civil order applications, the cost of the administration of arrests and criminal justice processes. The proportionate costs from the national total will impact our local budget as the bill matures.

Naturally, Chair, the impact on victims and Dorset residents will be kept under review, as will the resourcing implications. However, I do want to keep this in perspective and reiterate that the impact has been mild so far and that the anticipated volume of early release prisoners in Dorset is extremely low.

Priority Six - Make Every Penny Count

Question: I note that in the Q1 report we seem to be around £1m adrift in terms of employment costs and I wondered what steps are being taken to address this?

The consideration of employment costs and workforce levels are discussed at every Resource Control Board meeting, attended by my Chief Executive and Treasurer.

Officer numbers are monitored each month and the recruitment schedules are monitored and adjusted, depending on the numbers of leavers in order to ensure we achieve the design number but also consider the budget implications. Last year we deliberately recruited new neighbourhood officers before the end of the financial year so that they could be through their initial training before the summer but this will result in slightly smaller recruitment intakes throughout the year to bring us back towards the budgeted level. Overtime is also a challenge given the extended length of the summer demand this year which effectively started in April and is only just starting to reduce now.

In addition to this, the Force is reviewing the workforce mix across all operational areas through the Productivity and Efficiency Reviews, similar to the Priority Based Budgeting Reviews conducted across the alliance areas last year. This will identify options where a change in the workforce mix can deliver efficiency savings for example by employing a police staff member instead of an officer if warranted powers are not required, or by providing a service differently.

The Productivity and Efficiency Reviews (PERs) are a health-check across Dorset Police departments to find efficiencies and savings. The purpose is to prioritise steps to reduce waste, process, or bureaucracy, to make time and cash savings, and to find ways to improve service to the public.

The reviews are managed by the Project Evolve team and learn from the externally supported Priority Based Budgeting reviews previously completed, by shortening and simplifying the process to reduce the internal demand on staff, whilst at the same time offering significant executive challenge and grip to ensure that necessary savings and efficiencies are made. My Chief Executive and Director of Operations continue to be a key part of the PER process.

Question: *At the time of the precept, there remained some funding uncertainties. Can the PCC provide an update as to whether these uncertainties are now more clear, and the impacts on the financial position?*

Chair, I believe I responded to a similar question at the last Panel, but for clarity I can confirm the following.

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.

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