



**POLICE AND CRIME PANEL – 30 JUNE 2022**

## **THE STRATEGIC ALLIANCE**



## **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

*To provide members with an update on the current position of the Strategic Alliance between Dorset Police and Devon & Cornwall Police, including financial savings, operational efficiencies, and benefits to public safety.*

### **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. Every territorial police force in England and Wales works in collaboration with others, at a local, regional, or wider level. Across the public sector, it is established practice for agencies to collaborate with each other, and with partners, both on a local and a national scale. Collaboration done well can drive out financial savings, improve efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce duplication, thereby improving public service and outcomes.
- 1.2. Dorset Police and Devon & Cornwall Police formally entered into a strategic alliance in March 2015. The two forces (and three counties) share a common geography and demographics, with the mix of rural, coastal, and urban communities offer similar policing challenges, including the notable contributor of tourism.
- 1.3. Additionally, the two forces share a common commitment to sustaining an effective and proudly local policing service, whilst reducing costs, improving efficiency and resilience, and investing in tackling new and emerging threats. The alliance, therefore, is a collaboration of two equal partners in finding new and more efficient solutions to our policing needs, whilst at the same time remaining as separate forces.

### **2. GOVERNANCE**

- 2.1. The 'Working Together Board' continues to be the forum for making key strategic decisions and providing governance and oversight on the strategic alliance. This is a quarterly meeting of the two Chief Constables, two Police and Crime Commissioners, two Deputy Chief Constables, two Chief Executives, and four Chief Financial Officers representing the four policing legal entities (corporations sole) from Dorset and Devon & Cornwall. The Board is jointly chaired (on rotation) by the Chief Constables, and the agenda is set jointly by the Deputy Chief Constables and Chief Executives.

### 3. PRINCIPLES

3.1. In working together as a strategic alliance, Dorset Police and Devon & Cornwall Police agreed the following guiding principles:

- Local policing delivery will remain at the heart of everything we do to maintain public trust and confidence
- Services should be integrated and delivered jointly through alliance teams and streamlined management structures, unless proven inefficient or ineffective to do so
- Our ambition should not be limited by geography and should focus on continuous improvement
- We work as equal partners to find new solutions to our policing needs, whilst retaining separate identities and the independence of the four separate policing legal entities.

### 4. HISTORY

4.1. There are well in excess of 20 business areas which are managed by alliance departments and teams, covering both operational command, and enabling services. These are listed below in the order by which they 'went live' as alliance business areas, all between 2015 and 2018:

<b>Operational Command</b>	<b>Enabling Services</b>
Alliance Operations Dept	Alliance Admin Services Dept
Alliance Automatic Number Plate Recognition Team	Alliance Audit, Insurance & Strategic Risk Team
Alliance Dogs Team	Alliance Finance Dept
Alliance Roads Policing Team	Alliance Integrated Offender Mgmt. Team
Alliance Operations Planning Team	Alliance Information Assurance Team
Alliance Armed Response Vehicles Team	Alliance Fleet Services Dept
Alliance Tactical Firearms Team	Alliance ICT Dept
Alliance Force Support Group	Alliance People Dept
Alliance Drone Team	Alliance Information Compliance Team
	Alliance Firearms & Explosives Licensing Team
	Alliance Professional Standards Dept
	Alliance Corporate Communications Dept
	Alliance Evidential Property Team

4.2. Since late 2018, no further business areas have been aligned, and a steady state of 'working together' has ensued, with the operations and performance of the business areas being subject to the usual levels of scrutiny through the existing governance regimes. These include the various business, operations, and performance boards for both forces, some of which are attended by their respective OPCCs.

### 5. WORKING TOGETHER

5.1. In 2020, the HMICFRS thematic report on police collaborations '[Hard Yards](#)' noted that "too many police collaborations are failing, or not giving the results they should, costing forces money, time and effort".

5.2. It is wise to recognise that past decisions, often made by Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners no longer in post, whilst considered correct at the time might no longer be regarded as so, as some of the overriding issues of the past now exert a lesser effect. This is particularly the case for decisions made in the peak of austerity.

- 5.3. In the case of the Dorset and Devon & Cornwall collaboration, whilst service improvement was always at the heart of decision-making, there was also an evident need to drive out financial savings to protect frontline policing services.
- 5.4. In that context, it is right that existing collaborations are kept under regular review to ensure that the current outputs being delivered are what is needed today. To ensure this, the Working Together Board has agreed that annual reviews should take place for each business area, with a focus on service delivery, sequenced so that the outputs of the review can feed into the development of the Force Management Statements for each force.
- 5.5. Without wanting to be critical of other force collaborations, where disagreements between collaboration partners have led to public positions being taken and ultimatums given, the maturity of the Dorset and Devon & Cornwall alliance has allowed decisions to be taken to return to single force structures, where needed, with relative ease. For transparency, this has happened twice.
- 5.6. Firstly, in 2019, where the decision was taken to decouple the alliance arrangement that created a single Prevention Department across both forces. In this case, prevention activities, notably the differential levels in investment of the 'citizens in policing' agenda (cadets, special constables, and police staff volunteers) and in approaches taken to deliver services for young people (including investment into Safer Schools Teams), linked to the delivery of individual force priorities and police and crime plans ultimately began to impact on service delivery due to competing priorities from each force area.
- 5.7. Secondly, in 2020, an exception was reported through Working Together Board as the operational business had concluded that due to differential ICT systems, the Alliance Intelligence Department was working inefficiently in different ways to service the needs of both forces. Whilst both forces had the goal of a single ICT platform for crime recording, it was recognised that this was (at the time) still some years away, and after the development and careful scrutiny of a business case, the decision was taken to return this department to a single force structure.
- 5.8. Both decisions came at a modest cost but were needed to safeguard local service delivery for both forces. Leadership, staff resilience and wellbeing are key, and transition plans ensured continuity of service and a smooth passage through the exit process, with specialist support and advice available to personnel from HR change professionals.
- 5.9. 'Lessons learned' reports were drawn up and considered at Working Together Board to ensure, not only, appropriate oversight of the decoupling process, but also, a clear scrutiny of ongoing delivery to ensure the desired outcomes were successfully delivered. Philosophically, the strength of a force collaboration is not tested in equilibrium, but when there are challenges, and thus far the strategic alliance is living up to its principle of 'working together'.

## 6. CURRENT FOCUS

- 6.1. With the collaborated alliance units operating in a 'business as usual' state, members of the Working Together Board, have begun a discussion to agree the future direction of the Forces' activity, assurance, benefit management and futures planning to ensure these continue to meet organisational needs in delivering Police and Crime Plans, strategic Force Vision and Mission Statements, and other policing requirements.
- 6.2. As a result of this discussion, it has been agreed that the Working Together Board consider its business under three principal tranches:

**Assurance:** The board will continue to provide an overall assurance of delivery, receiving insight, analysis and performance reporting by exception to ensure the smooth progression

of alliance business. Individual governance will sit within projects, either individually or jointly managed by forces, with OPCC oversight. The board will continue its purpose to provide assurance and focus on areas of challenge – largely cross cutting risks, with strategic decisions, requests for funding or resource, or performance exceptions continuing to be reported to the board, as at present.

**Delivery and Benefits Realisation:** The board will continue to maintain oversight of strategic delivery, performance and benefits realisation across the range of alliance business areas. Recognising the challenge of producing a strategic performance dashboard across such disparate areas of delivery, it has been agreed that a three-pillar approach of considering people, cost and service will be developed (this model is explained further in paragraph 7.4).

**Futures Planning:** Finally, recognising that both Forces and both OPCCs are running suites of activity spanning delivery against local, regional and national priorities, the board will now ensure to set aside time to collaboratively review the collective response to these strategic challenges, and determine areas of joint future planning and activity. This also enables Dorset and Devon & Cornwall to have a clear view when highlighting possible areas for collaboration with the other three south west forces (Avon & Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire).

- 6.3. Whilst the Working Together Board had traditionally focused on the first two of these elements, given most of the activity is scrutiny and assurance of 'business as usual', it was important to restrengthen the strategic direction of the board to ensure it continued to fulfil its purpose of directing the development of the alliance.

## **7. SERVICE DELIVERY**

- 7.1. To receive assurance that the strategic alliance business areas are performing as required, the Working Together Board has asked for a new strategic performance framework to be developed, as the existing benefits realisation model was no longer fit for purpose given the change in focus in recent years.
- 7.2. As mentioned in paragraph 5.2, in particular, the existing cost benefits model reflected a different time in policing delivery, albeit that the savings targets set out in back in 2015 were achieved, when comparing a like-for-like service provision. Naturally, however, with the advent of uplift and the opportunity to raise service delivery to the public (and, of course, the impact of inflation and rising costs over time) the current actual costs of alliance departments, in 2022, is higher than in 2015. Consequently, it cannot be expected that the previously delivered savings will still be observable within 2022/23 budget lines.
- 7.3. Recognising the need to completely reset the existing performance framework, the current arrangements attached to Force collaborations elsewhere were considered including: the Welsh forces arrangements; Warwickshire and West Mercia; Surrey and Sussex; Hampshire and Thames Valley; and Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. In addition, the HMICFRS report mentioned above was reviewed and further information was provided by the author. These reviews established that in most Force collaborations, while there is significant monitoring and tracking of cashable savings realisation, there is little effective monitoring of the quality of service provided.
- 7.4. In order to identify a suitable framework of measures that could be tracked to assess the quality of service delivery, a range of internal information and performance assessment were considered. This led to the collation of a suite of measures that would provide a high-level performance monitoring framework under the three-pillar model, previously highlighted. This framework is still in development, but a concept example is outlined below:

<b>People</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Service</b>
Absence and assault rates	Adherence to agreed budgets	Public and victim satisfaction levels
Wellbeing assessments and staff survey	Achievement against corporate strategy	Internal customer satisfaction levels
Employee satisfaction	Internal and external audit	OPCC assessment
Turnover and retention rates	HMICFRS value for money profile	Partner and community feedback
PDR and talent review ratings		Scrutiny panels and IAGs
Success of recruitment and Positive Action campaigns		Local, national and partner evaluations

7.5. The framework, currently in development, will likely propose that each alliance department/unit/team will further refine their existing performance monitoring framework, and identify key or aggregate measures that provide useful indicators of strategic performance, stretch or challenge.

7.6. This would, essentially, lead to the production of a summary showing people, cost and service performance for each function. This dashboard would then be aggregated in the strategic overview framework, and be considered by other Force and Alliance boards, ultimately being reported, by exception, to Working Together Board.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

8.1. Like other territorial police forces within England and Wales, working in close collaboration with neighbouring Forces is very much business as usual, with no substantial changes in operations or governance mechanism in recent years.

8.2. However, over the past year, with the election of a new PCC, and the appointment of a new Chief Constable in Dorset and the re-election of the PCC in Devon and Cornwall it has been a good opportunity to consider the existing Strategic Alliance arrangements.

8.3. As a result of these discussions, the Working Together Board has determined that the existing strategic alliance benefits realisation model is out-of-date and needs to better reflect the current delivery priorities and operational context. This work is underway and will continue to be subject to close scrutiny and governance.

## **9. RECOMMENDATION**

9.1. Members are recommended to note the report.

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