

PCC Question and Answers

Actions:

PCC to report back on the force's Gold Group findings on 101 and emergency response.

Chair – I am happy to report that the Force has now responded to my Challenge on emergency response times. My team and I are quite pleased with the outcome here, as this represents a good example of the benefit of raising a formal challenge with the Force – as our enquiry pointed out a deficit with the way the data are reported, and Dorset Police has now taken advantage of understanding best practice from other Forces and has amended its processes accordingly.

In summary, like other Forces, Dorset has given itself a target of responding to Grade 1 - the highest priority - emergency calls for service within 20 minutes. This data was previously presented as measured from the time of the call being answered, to the time of the officer arriving on scene. Some forces measured this data similarly, whereas others started from the point that officers were dispatched, meaning that comparisons were difficult.

Dorset has now changed its process, and measures both answer time, as described, and response time – the time from the point of dispatch to the point of arrival. By clearly measuring both times, opportunities to examine both control room performance and local policing response can be taken.

The work has also considered a wide range of other factors, which I won't get into here – including resources, systems, infrastructure, and the relative use of different contact channels – and ultimately has resulted in a new performance measure being adopted. This is an ambitious, but achievable, call answering to dispatch target time of 5 minutes, and a dispatch to arrival target time of 15 minutes, meaning an overall response within 20 minutes.

The new target will be monitored through the Strategic Performance Board which is attended by my Chief Executive. A range of improvement to the call handling process have resulted in a speedier process there, and the latest stats are that 81% of grade 1 emergency calls are dispatched within 5 minutes, and that officers arrive at 77% of such calls within 15 minutes, which is also an improvement on the previous position.

PCC to provide an update on Operation Soteria Bluestone at the next meeting.

Thank you this is a timely question, given the announcement yesterday by Government, that Operation Soteria will be extended to all police forces in England and Wales, following a successful pilot in 19 forces, including Dorset.

Operation Soteria, previously known as Project Bluestone, was launched as a response to the government End-to-End Rape Review, and the Home Office pledge to increase the number of rape cases making it to court within this Parliamentary term.

Launching in June 2021, Dorset came onboard as a Soteria pilot force around one year later, building on the initial work by A&S under the Project Bluestone banner and the input of the four pathfinder forces – the Met, Durham, West Mids and South Wales.

Soteria is a police-academic collaboration, aiming to combine a strong police practitioner knowledge base with a strong academic research foundation – with the aim of developing a new operating model for the investigation and prosecution of rape capable of national rollout.

The principles of Soteria are:

1. A suspect focused investigation, including disrupting and challenging repeat offenders
2. Using procedural justice to underpin victim engagement
3. Placing investigator knowledge, learning and wellbeing at the heart of improvement
4. Systematic use, analysis and exploitation of data

In a bit more detail then, the current position of this work is as follows:

Suspect focused investigation – without getting too academic, Chair, Soteria recognises the fundamental importance of understanding human psychology in achieving a successful court outcome. This includes better understanding how offenders select, groom and exploit their victims and identify their vulnerabilities; how they attempt to assure investigators and prosecutors, and exploit not only the preconceptions and ways of thinking of investigators, but also the realities and weaknesses of the Criminal Justice System to evade justice, enabling many to repeat and refine their behaviour time after time. A greater perpetrator focus, powered by this understanding and underpinning improved case building will be the key difference in achieving better outcomes, and emerging learning in this area is being shared with our investigators and programmed into national training.

Procedural justice – relates to the idea that fair processes, and people's perception of fairness, is strongly impacted by the quality of their experiences, and not only the final outcomes of these experiences. Psychology is also, therefore, very relevant when it comes to victim engagement and maximising victims' ability to cope and recover. The role of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, which the Panel has heard about before, are critical to this, and we are ensuring this emerging learning is fed into our ISVAs and into Maple, Dorset Police's in-house domestic abuse advisor (DAA) provision.

Investigator knowledge and capability – is clearly critical in achieving successful outcomes. This is more than just formal learning programmes – which have already been informed by Soteria learning and are being trailed in pilot form – but includes core reflective practice at every stage of the investigation process, as a discipline and daily habit. This way of working has proven benefits for wellbeing too. The value of undertaking this reflective practise as a wider group including the other key players in the prosecution system is considered to be of significant benefit, and is also being advocated by Soteria.

Exploitation of data – policing recognises that it must invest more time and energy at a corporate and system level on data and analysis. This means using data in an intelligent and forensic way – to identify where the gaps, blockages and pinch points are; to analyse root causes; to take action on them in an evidence-based way and to evaluate the effect on the system of that action. Data is a critical asset. Soteria has now set out further opportunities for policing and our partners to make the most of the data we hold, to drive better outcomes.

Finally, Soteria is helping to better **understand and address police culture** and drive performance improvements to victims. Although police culture is often seen as a monolith, the reality is that there are often three separate subcultures at play within Forces:

1. Culture 1 consists of individuals who are not yet bought into VAWG being a priority. They must actively be engaged, informed, and ultimately changed.
2. Culture 2 are change agents who are actively involved and supportive of driving policing improvements in VAWG. They must be recognised and rewarded.
3. Culture 3 are those people who are new to policing, and who may not yet have a clear or informed view. They are our future and we must bring them into culture 2, not culture 1.

Overall, Operation Soteria is offering policing an opportunity to not be defensive about identifying and addressing opportunities for improvement, to recognise the benefit of working closely with our prosecutors, DAA and ISVA colleagues, and to move past the past.

Chair, conviction rates for RASSO are nationally very low and no PCC or Chief Constable would say anything other than they wish to see many more perpetrators brought to justice. There are early signs that indicate some progress for Soteria forces (whether that be more timely charging decisions, or better file quality, alongside some slightly improved outcome rates), but we must recognise that this is a complex issue and RASSO cases can take many years to work the CJS, so it may be some time before we fully understand the benefits of this work and, of course, we will keep members informed.

In Quarter Questions

Question Lead – Mike

Sir Mark Rowley, the Met Commissioner, has stated that he will order his officers not to attend mental health incidents unless life is at threat. This panel has discussed with the PCC in the recent past the “what will no longer be done” question. Should the Chief Constable approach you stating that she is going to pursue the same operational policy as Sir Mark:

- What action will you take with other agencies in order to minimise the impact on the NHS.
- How have you ensured that the Chief Constable pursues the “Right Care, Right Person” approach?
- HMICFRS recently stated that our force has been asked to work with mental health services to improve the decision-making process for frontline officers dealing with mental health incidents. What oversight of the CC have you undertaken following this HMICFRS report.

If I may, Chair, I’ll take the first two points together, and deal with the third in a moment.

Recognising that this work is still subject to wider development, and that I will provide a fuller update to the Panel in due course – once the detail of the national rollout of the Right Care, Right Person approach is known – I’ll start by explaining the work underway in Dorset to identify, articulate and address the wicked issue of mental health demand.

Firstly, and this is important to state, policing is a 24/7 service and is often regarded as the service of both first and last resort. This means that police officers are often required to manage individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. Whilst officers will continue to be supportive, considerate, and compassionate in those circumstances – individuals will be served best by an expert response that police officers are simply not trained to deliver. Not only does this let down individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, their family and friends, but also, police officers and staff upon whom we place an unnecessary and unfair burden.

Policing has, for many years now, carried this additional burden and dealt with the inevitable failure that these intolerable situations bring. Deaths in police custody of those experiencing mental health crisis; individuals being taken to hospital or mental health facilities in the back of police cars in handcuffs as opposed to in ambulances with specialist staff; and individuals released from police custody only to find themselves back there hours later as they have been unable to access mental health services – all of these are disappointingly commonplace occurrences the length and breadth of the country.

And again, for many years now, policing has sought to pick up the pieces of a lack of specialist mental health services and put in place their own mental health triage approaches, often jointly staffed with health colleagues, and running at peak periods of demand, in peak areas. At some point a line in the sand must be drawn.

This is where Right Person, Right Care comes in. In 2019, Humberside Police convened a multi-agency task and finish group, attended by senior executive and managerial representatives from: local authorities, mental health providers, acute hospital trusts, ambulance trusts, clinical commissioning groups, and third sector charities and organisations – with the focus of their work being to reach an agreement between health and social care partners and the police that ensured that those with the right skills, training and experience responded to mental health related calls for service.

I'll dwell on this point for a moment if I may. The story around the Met's announcement focused on the headline, and not the considerable work that sat underneath that decision.

The principles of RCRP suggest that there must be improved multi-agency and partnership responses to mental health-related incidents, and that the public will receive an improved service, provided by those who are better able to access subject matter experts and appropriate specialist support. Whilst the reduction in the numbers of inappropriate attendance at mental health incidents by police will also be achieved, the critical deliverable is improved service delivery to the public.

As you may guess, I am a strong advocate of this model, as is the Chief Constable.

Although the Met has taken the decision to go early with RCRP, based on the work undertaken by Humberside, most Forces – including Dorset – are waiting for the national guidance for the implementation of RCRP to be developed by the NPCC and College and disseminated to Forces. As said Chair, I will ensure to update panel members further on this important initiative as it continues to develop.

The third point then, I believe, was in relation to the HMICFRS inspection visit to Dorset Police custody suites, published in May. The report highlighted that, and I quote in full:

“The force and mental health services don't have good enough arrangements to deal with people with mental ill health. Frontline officers called to incidents in public places can't always get the support they need from mental health professionals. This potentially leads to people being detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983, when other more appropriate solutions may have been available. Detainees wait too long for a Mental Health Act assessment in custody when required, with further waits before they are transferred to a mental health facility. There is very little information and no monitoring to show how well the needs of people with mental ill health are met, and little joint work to try to improve outcomes for them.”

You will note that HMICFRS are making the same argument that I have just articulated. Their recommendation was that – again I quote:

“The force should work with mental health services to make sure people with mental ill health are dealt with appropriately and their needs met.”

This element will be addressed by RCRP. There were other elements, relating to data collation and care provided within the custody setting and, like other HMICFRS recommendations, my team formally raise these with the Force and seek a formal response, which I then may need to discuss further with the Chief Constable. This response is currently in the process of being drafted, and in the interim my team has also discussed this report at the regular meeting of my Independent Custody Visitor's scheme, and their views have been fed back to the Force custody Inspectors.

Question Lead – Priority Two (Sherry)

Last month a number of Dorset Police officers were sacked for sharing racist, sexist and homophobic messages on WhatsApp. In light of this case – how has the PCC held the Ch Cons to account for the delivery of the Police Race Action Plan and other relevant strategies and action plans. Moreover, what action has the PCC taken to remove the possibility of this high profile case happening in the future?

Let me start by saying that following the outcomes of the misconduct hearing my senior team and I have received a briefing on the details of this case, and I welcome the misconduct panel's decision. The sanctions that have been placed on the officers that have been found guilty of misconduct are appropriate in light of the evidence that was presented.

I also welcome the clear leadership shown by the Force in this matter and note that the apology made by the Deputy Chief Constable that the behaviour of these officers let the public of Dorset down.

Alongside the Force leadership, I remain committed to Dorset Police investigating any unethical or unacceptable behaviour within its ranks, and I continue to encourage members of the public to report any experiences of wrongdoing, or a falling in standards by officers to Dorset Police.

In terms of my own activity, as members will recognise this is largely managed through my scrutiny of Force governance and strategy. Dorset Police has a well-established governance framework, encompassing an examination of areas such as performance, legitimacy, disproportionality, and equality, diversity, and inclusion – which are attended by my Chief Executive or my Director of Operations.

My team identified opportunities for further improvements to be made in respect of Dorset Police's consideration of these important areas, and as a consequence I have raised these concerns to the Chief Constable and sought a remedy. My Chief Executive has worked closely with the Deputy Chief Constable to address the concerns and Dorset Police has tweaked its governance structure, and produced a Governance Handbook, something which did not previously exist.

I mention this process to demonstrate how my office and I add value and hold the Force to account for improving services.

In addition to this scrutiny as part of business as usual:

- I issued a PCC Challenge on vetting to seek reassurance that this was robust for both new recruits and for transferees. I was assured by the response provided by the Chief Constable, albeit we both agreed to remain vigilant.
- I advocated for sufficient monitoring of Force ICT systems – both desktop and handheld devices – and I am pleased to report that the required software is now in place, is being fully utilised and that there are clear routes to follow up any resulting intelligence.
- I have also recently agreed to enhance the role my team and I play in scrutinising the use of police powers within Dorset, and as a next step I will be further considering opportunities to enhance the role we play in the complaints system. This includes the review and appeal function, dip-sampling of complaints, and liaison with the IOPC.

Finally, as it happens, I asked the Dorset Police Head of Professional Standards whether we could prevent such cases arising in the future. He was honest and said that is an outcome that no one can promise. Whilst the Chief Constable and I will do everything we can to minimise the opportunity of similar cases arising in the future – that fact remains that they will, in every Force, in every public body, in every organisation and institution, because human beings are flawed and because we all have biases and prejudices.

Question Lead – Priority One (Pete)

Dorset has been chosen as an area for a pilot scheme for tackling anti-social behaviour named the "immediate justice" scheme. Can the PCC please provide a succinct outline of this pilot, the duration and what involvement his office will have. The scheme is also aiming to give victims of anti-social behaviour from the local community a say in offenders' punishments – how will this be moderated?

I will try and be succinct Chair. Government published its ASB Action Plan in March. Launching the strategy, the Prime Minister said that he was determined to restore the public's confidence that those responsible will be quickly and visibly punished.

Which is where Immediate Justice could come in.

Immediate Justice is a programme aimed at delivering swift and visible punishment for ASB, diverting people away from the criminal justice system, and making sure offenders undertake practical, reparative activity to make good the loss or damage sustained by victims.

It is very similar to the existing community payback scheme - under this initiative, offenders, will be made to work under supervision, maybe to pick up litter, remove graffiti or tidy parks or other communal spaces as punishment for their actions, and victims of ASB from the local community will be given a say in those punishments.

I'll say a bit more here as it was asked. The practice of restorative justice is well established, both in Dorset through our commissioned provider, and nationally. As a result, there are clear process and guidelines about what constitutes appropriate reparative behaviour, and those are discussed with both offenders and victims as part of RJ schemes. With regards to IJ, the OPCC will be engaging with victims about the types of reparative activity that will be proposed – this detail is not yet available – but will likely fall into the types of activity I have highlighted.

Back to the detail of the IJ initiative, the Govt ambition is for the reparative actions to start 48 hours after an offence has been confirmed and notified to the IJ scheme.

This will be based on the existing powers that police have to issue out of court disposals with conditions to undertake reparative action, and the expectation is for officers to continue to use their discretion and national guidance to decide which offences were appropriate for this disposal and the conditions that should be applied.

16 trailblazer areas were announced at the same time of the strategy – some focusing on Immediate Justice, some benefiting from additional funding to surge the policing response in hotspot areas, and some having both.

There was no prior notice that Dorset would be chosen, but we are one of the ten IJ areas, and are expecting to receive around £1m to deliver this initiative, this year. The Govt intention is to roll-out IJ and hotspot policing to all force areas from next year, so we have an advantage in being a trailblazer area.

No10 has asked that trailblazer areas are up and running, to some extent, this month, and that they are fully operational by October. This is a very ambitious timescale, which has been somewhat hindered by the fact that HO and DLUHC officials are currently writing the detail of the initiative as we speak, and so the development is somewhat complex.

Overall, my position is that this is not something that we would necessarily have chosen to spend a £1m on given the other priorities that exist, but we will nevertheless maximise the use of the central funds to enhance our local services and improve public confidence and assurance.

Question Lead – Priority Three (Patrick)

The Home Office is conducting an internal investigation to examine the circumstances surrounding the murder of Tom Roberts in Bournemouth by an asylum seeker. What action has the PCC taken to lobby for this report to be issued in order that Dorset can take forward lessons identified to keep people safe?

Appreciating that we have had several personnel changes since our last meeting Chair, returning members will recall the statement I made at the beginning of our meeting in February.

I wrote to the Home Secretary at the end of March, highlighting that the murder of Tom Roberts created not just local but also national press and political interest – and specifically that I was seeking her public assurance about this matter specifically, and about the vetting of the individuals expected to be housed in the Portland Port asylum ferry.

A fortnight later, in April, I repeated my concerns to the Policing Minister – copying the Home Secretary, our two local Parliamentarians, the Dorset Council Leader and the Chief Constable into my letter. I also wrote to the Dorset Coroner's office in response to their concerns, highlighting the actions I had taken, and encouraging them to also lobby the Home Office in the same manner.

I am disappointed to report that my letters remained unanswered, and so I took the opportunity of being in a meeting with the Policing Minister to raise my concerns in person, and follow-up by private email.

I have now had an answer back from the Home Office, relating to the vetting of the accommodation vessel inhabitants with which I am content, but I yet to hear back specifically on this matter.

Question Lead – Priority Six (Mike)

With the imminent berthing of the ship in Portland, what action has the PCC taken in order to secure additional funding to cover the potential upswing in policing demand and how will this funding be utilised? How has the PCC engaged with Local Authorities over provision of assurance?

Chair, I fear that were I to give a full readout of the actions I had undertaken to secure appropriate levels of funding to cover the potential demand brought about by the imminent arrival of the asylum accommodation vessel that would, not only, take up the rest of our allotted time here today, but also, the rest of the working day itself.

I will therefore summarise as follows. In the first instance the Chief Constable and I worked together to identify the expected likely costs that might fall to Dorset Police – this would not only encompass the additional local policing requirement, but also the planning and partnership engagement processes needed to facilitate the success of this initiative, and the intelligence, community cohesion, reassurance, and wider communication needs. The Chief and I then submitted these indicative costs to the HO for their consideration.

I would characterise the HO response as lethargic, and with the community rightly clamouring for information I turned the screws and over a period of a few weeks wrote to the Home Secretary, Policing Minister, Immigration Minister, and various HO officials on this matter. My team and I also have also had several meetings with HO officials, and I have had the opportunity to lobby Ministers directly through my usual engagement with them.

Long story short Chair, the current position is that the HO has finally agreed to provide an initial level of funding that matches our original ask, agreed to fund the costs of any requests for mutual aid that Dorset Police initiates in support of policing the accommodation vessel, and agreed to consider requests for further funding should the vessel stay for longer than the year for which the initial funding has been provided.

As I am sure both members and the public will be interested in the relevant sums, which are:

- Under some duress, the Home Office has agreed to increase its initial funding offer to support the community policing of the accommodation vessel from £375k to £520k, which is in line with my minimum request.
- The Home Office has also agreed to reimburse Dorset Police for any mutual aid costs, that it is liable for, in support of the policing of the accommodation vessel.

Both of these are limited to an initial period of 12 months, although the Home Office has stated that should funding be required beyond this period, for example should the vessel stay longer, this would be discussed and considered.

In addition to this, the Home Office has recognised that there may be new demands on police capability and capacity deriving from accommodation vessel, and that funding may be required to cover this additionality. The option therefore remains open that the Chief Constable and I will issue a further bid to the Home Office, should further costs be identified.

This is an incredibly complex challenging issue, and my team and I continue to work closely with colleagues in policing, local authorities, and health, to ensure that both the totality of the funding allocation to Dorset, and the individual funding allocations to each agency, are appropriate. I appreciate that the community have also been left in the dark as we have tried to extract information from the Home Office.

For the moment though, in relation to the funding for policing, I am content that my initial concerns have been addressed, but I expect that a further bid will be required in due course.

Quarterly Report

Question Lead – Priority One

Data from the Home Office has revealed the low number of crimes reported to Dorset Police between September 2021 and September 2022 which resulted in a prosecution. It is acknowledged that there is a need to improve the number of crimes where an offender is identified and held to account by the criminal justice system. How is the PCC holding the CC to account for the delivery of this improvement?

Chair, the issue of reducing positive outcomes rates is one which policing as a whole has been grappling with for some time now. Broadly speaking we are a safe county, the sixth safest in fact as I am sure members know, however with regards to positive outcomes rates – our performance is average.

As a result of this the Force has improved its positive outcomes rate as a key performance outcome this year, and it is crime outcome performance is routinely scrutinised at the Performance Board, which is attended by my Chief Executive.

First, a brief context for the benefit of new members. There are currently 22 possible outcomes for crimes, as listed in the Home Office crime outcomes framework.

Some of these are considered positive in the sense that there is a tangible outcome that offers justice for the victim. For example:

- Outcome 1 – charge / summons, where a person is charged or summonsed to appear at court, or
- Outcome 2 – caution, where a person receives a formal police caution, and
- There are also a range of outcomes relating to warnings (e.g. for cannabis possession), for community resolutions (which might include the use of restorative justice), or penalty notices for disorder (fines, in other words).

Then there are a number of outcomes where formal action was not taken, perhaps because the suspect or victim or key witness died or was too ill (Outcome 5, 12 or 13), because the CPS decided the case was not in the public interest to pursue (Outcome 9).

Finally, there is a range of outcomes where there are evidential difficulties such as a suspect not being identified (Outcome 18), or a suspect being identified but there being insufficient evidence to progress (Outcome 15), or suspect being identified but the victim not supporting further action (Outcome 16). These may be regarded as more negative outcomes.

Policing, therefore, makes an assessment of positive outcome rates, and actively tries to increase this, in order to bring more offenders to justice. Over the past year, Dorset Police's positive outcome rate has been around 11%, with the upper quartile for the higher performing Forces starting just over 13%. This places Dorset at 25th out of 43 forces, which is an unverified position pending the release of the national statistics.

My Chief Executive attends the Force's monthly strategy performance board, where these data are considered in detail, this is the first line holding to account mechanism, and any performance exceptions are then highlighted to me for discussion with the Chief Constable.

I am aware of the improvement work the Force is progressing in the space – covering both improving investigation standards including timeliness, workload checks, outstanding crimes, outstanding suspects, and arrest rates as well as a specific focus on driving up positive outcome rates on specific crime types, in specific locations and at specific times.

I am also aware of the work being undertaken by the Make the Difference team, a bespoke performance improvement team within Dorset Police which undertakes a deep dive into specific areas or issues to identify opportunities for continual improvement and marginal gains in police performance.

This includes an examination of the better performers, and how their use of arrests and community resolutions affects their positive outcomes rates, given the complexity I outlined earlier. As a result of this deep dive, Dorset Police is targeting maintaining its already high level of crime recording and data integrity, with improving its overall positive outcome rate from 11% to 13% in the first instance. There are also several thresholds within this for improving the positive outcome rate for specific crime types, but I will not go into that level of detail here.

Sufficient, Chair, I hope to say that it is an area of performance that both the Chief Constable and I would like to improve. I am aware of the improvement plan in place, my Chief Executive will continue to update me on delivery through our usual methods of scrutiny, and I will continue to raise any performance exceptions to the Chief Constable as needed.

Priority Two - Make Policing More Visible and Connected

- The percentage of people who feel Dorset Police do a good job in their area is at 66%. What action has the PCC placed on the Ch Con to improve this statistic noting that the target is 80%? (it is better than the last Quarter, which was at 64%)?

That is a good spot, and it is an area that the Performance Board took a deep dive into in May of this year as we were one year into new arrangements.

In May 2022, the long running Community Safety Survey, for which this statistic is taken, moved to a new provider, SMSR, who already worked with several police forces, local authorities, and national charities. For the benefit of new member, this survey is conducted over the phone, with the provider randomly contacting individuals until 1200 responses are gained each year.

There were some minor methodological changes to the way the survey was collated in 2022/23, and some further work was undertaken to ensure that data from 22/23 are comparable to the previous years' results, but this is not something that I am overly concerned with at this stage – as the data, as stated, reflect an improving performance position.

Longer standing members might recall that the data were higher during the Covid period, so 2020/21 and 2021/22, as the percentage of the public who felt Dorset Police was doing a good job increased considerably, from a five-year average of 61% pre-Covid, to an average of 77% during the Covid period.

The position of increased confidence, reassurance, and satisfaction in the police during the Covid period is also reflected in other measures from the same Community Safety Survey. If we discount the data during this period then, when public confidence was potentially artificially high, the percentage of people who think Dorset Police is doing a good job has risen from 61% pre-Covid, to 66% post-Covid.

Therefore, at this stage Chair, I am content that performance in this area is improving, and whilst the stated target of 80% reflects a historical high position, I am very mindful of the wider challenges facing UK policing and how these can affect local confidence and satisfaction rates here in Dorset. This is not to discount the figures, but to recognise the scale of the challenge and that both local and national confidence measures show a downwards trend over the past decade. With that in mind, my conversation with the Chief Constable about these measures is more nuanced, rather than simply seeking a short-term improvement.

Priority Four - Fight Rural Crime

- Following the Southwest PCCs lobbying government on penalties for fly-tipping offences can the PCC provide an update on the Minister's proposals?

The Dorset Rural Crime Reduction Board was launched early last year, and agreed a range of actions, one of which is to raise the profile of the impact of fly-tipping on landowners, the public, and the Dorset countryside and wildlife, and highlight the need for tougher consequences for offenders.

As noted, I have been working with PCC colleagues across the Southwest to target these issues at a regional level too. In January of this year, the five Southwest PCCs sent a letter to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – Therese Coffey.

Our proposals included:

- To increase the maximum fixed penalty notices for small scale fly-tipping to £1000
- To change the maximum fine of £50,000 to become a minimum fine to be imposed on repeat, large scale offenders
- A greater use of powers to impound and destroy vehicles involved in fly-tipping
- To introduce a national waste crime offenders list for individuals and companies
- To support and fund the creation of a national analysis resource to enable the police to effectively collect and analyse data on fly-tipping in rural areas and to tackle organised criminal gangs profiting from fly-tipping in the countryside

Pleasingly, as part of the wider ASB measures, it has been announced that:

- The minimum fine for fly-tipping was being raised from £400 to £1000
- The maximum fine for those who litter, or graffiti will increase from £150 to £500
- The maximum fine those who breach their household waste duty of care will increase from £400 to £600

These changes will come into force on 31 July, and in addition to increasing the upper limit on fines, the government has launched a consultation on ringfencing the receipts from fixed penalty notices for litter and fly-tipping to fund local authorities' enforcement and clean-up activities, such as spending the money raised from fining criminals on further enforcement officers. This would see the fines go directly back into repairing the damage caused, or into enforcement efforts to prevent similar incidents from happening again.

Although the proposal to publish a list of national waste offenders has not been taken forward, government has outlined proposals to publish league tables for local authorities based on their fly-tipping performance. And, the proposals also set out that more support will be given to local authorities and policing to aid with removing vehicles, by removing the need to have the regulator present when a police officer seizes a vehicle unlawfully carrying waste.

FY 22/23 Q4 finance questions:

- The Q3 report highlighted that £0.5M overspend was predicted. Due to the actions of the Efficiency Board, this has now a favourable end of year outcome of £706K underspend. Can the OPCC please provide a succinct view on how this £1.2M turnaround was achieved and provide reassurance to the people of Dorset that public facing services have not been affected. In addition, how will the carry-forward requests be carefully managed in financial year 2023/24?

Several factors have contributed to the turnaround in the financial position. The over achievement of the uplift target generated additional grant of £160,000 as a result of recruiting 8 additional officers over and above our uplift target. Significant focus has been placed on financial management and awareness across the force, working with budget holders to drive out efficiencies, with the creation of an Efficiency Board to oversee reductions in spend required for the 23/24 budget. This has led to a much greater awareness across the Force of the financial challenges which has, for example, led to a slowing down of staff recruitment. This was often a conscious decision in order to provide greater challenge, through a vacancy review panel, to whether the role to be recruited was in a key area or whether the role could be filled in a different way. There have also been instances of being unable to recruit when roles were advertised due to a slower employment market. This has not impacted on front line service delivery.

The Efficiency Board also oversaw challenges to reduce IT Licence Fees by scrutinising the numbers of devices allocated to individuals and recalling items not being utilised, for example recalling desktop machines following the issuing of laptops during the pandemic. We also started to see the result of the change in culture of the greater financial awareness; budget holders were more questioning of whether spend was required, could it be delayed or could it be done differently? The ongoing challenge of managing overtime also started to produce results – and even though overtime was still overspent overall, the BCP area managed to come in under budget for the first time.

In terms of the carry forward requests, they have been agreed to be transferred to the Budget Management Reserve but will require further authorisation to come out of the reserve to make sure that the request is still the right priority for the funding. We know that 2023/24 will be a challenging year financially therefore we need to be able to respond to any changing priorities should they arise. This process will be overseen by the Resource Control Board, which is a joint Force / OPCC board.

- Every year there is inordinate slippage in the Capital programme, primarily in ICT. When will the PCC take a deep dive into this area in order to grip the situation?

Slippage is a common feature of most capital programmes, which typically contain projects and programmes that cover multiple years and don't neatly fit into financial years. Previously we've had issues with the vehicle replacement programme and the work we've done through the Capital Strategy Group has resulted in this being much more accurately forecasted, despite really difficult circumstances.

The Capital Strategy Group had a robust discussion about this year's level of slippage, both for Estates and ICT, at their meeting in April. In particular whilst there are some projects which at Q3 were reasonably expected to complete by 31 March but were then unavoidably delayed, there were some areas where delays could have been highlighted earlier. Our contributions to national IT projects such as Emergency Services Network also fall within this area. The accuracy of forecasts will remain a focus of the Capital Strategy Group as we go through the year.

- The PCC now holds £1.7M in reserves. What is deemed a suitable threshold for reserves in this area and what plans are in place to utilise some of this taxpayer's funds in the next financial year?

There are no set thresholds for earmarked reserves, it is down to local circumstances and judgements. The funds are held in 3 reserves; the Legal Reserve is for legal support for officers under specific circumstances where the OPCC has a duty to provide support. This is now approaching the maximum level that we feel we need but there are currently no cases requiring such support. The second reserve is from the OPCC office costs and would be used for additional pieces of work, specialist skills or pump priming new projects.

The main reserve is the Police and Crime Plan reserve and now holds a balance of just over £1m. The main priority for this reserve will be to supplement the Serious Violence Duty funding and the creation of a Violence Reduction Unit. We have been working with partners to understand their plans to spend the Serious Violence Duty funding so that we can look at how to fill in any gaps. Once we have this detail we can be clearer on timescales for delivery.

NTE Questions:

- The PCC is to be congratulated on obtaining funding for additional CCTV cameras in NTE “hotspots”. How is the funding of the additional monitoring staff managed and is there any data to prove that these cameras drive down violence and criminality? Or is their prime benefit providing evidence for successful prosecution of perpetrators?

Chair, CCTV cameras are proven to prevent crime, aid with the detection of offences and also assist with public order scenarios. They are a recognised and evidence-based tactic that is endorsed by the College of Policing.

The cameras in question have received funding through separate rounds of the Government’s Safer Streets Fund. In 2021 a successful bid enabled BCP Council to install CCTV cameras in eight areas which have been directly affected by crime including Christchurch Road in Boscombe, Christchurch Road in Pokesdown and Southbourne Grove. In 2021 and 2022 we facilitated five new cameras at the Marsh; five new cameras on the Rodwell Trail; and an additional 10 cameras in Weymouth Town Centre. This funding also provided for additional daytime CCTV monitoring officers and an expansion of the Dorset CCTV Control Room. By using a centralised CCTV Control Room, it has been possible to expand CCTV provision throughout the county without incurring huge additional staffing costs.

Of course, while the cameras will have already been used to assist with prosecutions and also to assist with live incidents, it is notoriously difficult to prove the prevention of crimes – not least to isolate the effect of individual tactics, bearing in mind the many preventative measures being undertaken simultaneously within the NTE, as outlined in the paper.

I am confident that the addition of these cameras not only helps to keep people safer in town centres, but also helps to make people feel safer too.

- What action is taken when premises are linked to the illegal supply of alcohol, nitrous oxide and vapes (to young people)?

The simple answer is that any such premises risk losing their licence, facing a fine, or even facing a prison sentence. I certainly would wish for extremely robust monitoring and enforcement action in any such instances.

Of course, it’s important to stress that it is the local authority Trading Standards that enforces legislation which prohibits the supply of most age restricted goods. Trading Standards are responsible for a programme of education to businesses, alongside test purchase exercises for the substances that you have mentioned. Indeed, last year you may recall that Trading Standards discovered that a large number of premises in Dorset were selling e-cigarettes and vaping products to children without adequately checking ID.

Trading Standards works with a wide array of partners including Licensing and Community Safety teams, Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs and Dorset Police.

Alongside this activity, the Dorset Police officers will also seize any contraband materials that are discovered during the course of their duties, or as a consequence of intelligence received. You will, I am sure have read about occasions in which neighbourhood officers, alongside licensing and trading standards colleagues, have confiscated vapes and nitrous oxide canisters.

We will not tolerate the illegal use or sale of controlled substances and you’ll know, Chair, that I am particularly worried about the high harm that such substances can cause young people.