POLICE AND CRIME PANEL – 11 DECEMBER 2024

POLICE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

REPORT BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide members with an update on the PCC's work in support of the best use of technology within the Police and Crime Plan priority of Making Every Penny Count. This paper also seeks to address the Key Lines of Enquiry as provided by the Dorset Police and Crime Panel:

   I.   *How is the PCC investing in technology to meet the desired outcomes set out in his Police and Crime Plan? Please provide some case studies (examples may include: Digital Evidence Management (DEMS); Single Online Home; Video Enhanced Contact; PRONTO)?*

  II.   *For each case study, please identify how the success of the investment is being monitored, in terms of value for money; improved performance; and impact on delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.*

 III.   *What horizon scanning is the PCC undertaking to identify future technology investment opportunities to meet future needs/demand?*

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Dorset County Constabulary was formed in 1856. From the use of Victorian police equipment such as the police whistle, rattle, and lantern to the wide range of communications, surveillance, protective, and tactical equipment, and technology available to officers, staff, and volunteers today, the history of policing has been one of constant scientific and technological evolution driven by a relentless desire to stay one step ahead of criminals and protect the public.

1.2.   However, as the research, development, and manufacture of technology is not necessarily a core police objective, the delivery of this important enabling service is nowadays managed through a mix of bodies, virtual structures, and other capabilities operating at the national, regional, alliance, and individual Force level, as well as through a network of strategic partnerships with commercial and academic enterprises.

1.3.   A brief overview of some of these external capabilities will be outlined before providing a summary of local governance arrangements, and then several case studies relating to technology invested, or potentially about to be invested, in by the PCC. Finally, a very brief summary of future areas of opportunity will be detailed, under horizon scanning.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. A range of national structures exist that manage and govern policing technology collaborations and capabilities on behalf of Chief Constables and their equivalents, and PCCs and their equivalents. The below is by no means an extensive list but does illustrate some of the different types of structures and collaborations that exist, and how they are governed.

2.2. Despite the range of structures and bodies in place to govern policing technology at a national level, these all refer to the single strategy which sets the direction for the police use of technology, namely the joint NPCC and APCC National Policing Digital Strategy 2020-2030[1].

Police Digital Service

2.3. At the national level, the Police Digital Service (PDS) is the UK organisation responsible for coordinating, developing, delivering, and managing digital services and solutions that enable UK policing to safely harness technology to improve public safety. PDS is governed[2] by a board of Directors that includes Home Office officials, Chief Constables and equivalents, and Police and Crime Commissioners and equivalents.

2.4. PDS typically focuses on programmes of work which are whole-system and transformative, such as progressing delivery of a national Digital Fingerprint Capability which will provide a real-time fingerprint identification service to forces by providing secure remote transmission from a crime scene to the Home Office Biometrics database, in line with the Forensic Science Regulator's code of practice. It is estimated that, once operational, £6m per year might be saved nationally through removing the current fingerprint workflow and digital process.

2.5. PDS is also, for example, working to support delivery of the national policing priority areas of violence against women and girls (VAWG) through the development of capabilities to support the national rollout of Operation Soteria, and cyber-crime through the production of national guidance for cyber security policies and standards for policing and partner agencies.

BlueLight Commercial

2.6. Also at the national level, albeit not directly responsible for the development of technology, BlueLight Commercial (BLC) is responsible for the procurement of national policing technology capabilities. BLC is a membership-based organisation, open to any agency with an interest in improving the delivery of effective commercial services to the bluelight services. BLC is governed[3] by a board of largely PCCs and equivalents, and Chief Constables.

2.7. BLC manages the commercial arrangements with several technology suppliers on behalf of its members, using collective bargaining and economies of scale to drive better value from contracts than forces could achieve individually. Typically, BLC manages commercial arrangements on behalf of forces with organisations such as Microsoft, Adobe, and IBM. At the half-year reporting stage (30 September 2024) BLC reported savings of £18.1m against the full-year Home Office set target of £30m.

Home Office

2.8. Home Office Police and Public Protection Technology (PPPT) is primarily responsible for the design, build and deployment of national law enforcement systems, ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of systems which support all UK police forces, and some law-enforcement arm's length bodies, in total incorporating a user community of more than 300,000 individuals.

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[1] https://pds.police.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/National-Policing-Digital-Strategy-2020-2030.pdf
[2] https://pds.police.uk/governance/
[3] https://bluelightcommercial.police.uk/about/governance/

2.9. PPPT consists of over one thousand individuals across a variety of teams and organisations. Its governance sits within Home Office structures and, as such, is ultimately the responsibility of Government. PPPT is responsible for a plethora of national systems, including the:

- Police National Computer (PNC)
- Police National Database (PND)
- National ANPR Service (NAS)
- Child Abuse Image Database (CAID)
- Penalty Notices system (PentiP)
- Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR)

2.10. PPPT also manages several national contact and incident management systems including providing the national 101 non-emergency telephone line. It furthermore includes Home Office Biometrics which provides for the development and enhancement of biometric services to support both policing (criminal investigation, victim identification, counter-terrorism operations, etc) as well as for borders, immigration, and asylum purposes.

2.11. Whilst Dorset Police does benefit from the technology services and systems that these national capabilities provide, like other individual PCCs and Chief Constables, our local leadership has limited scope to challenge and support their operation.

Minerva Programme

2.12. The Minerva Programme was created in 2013 as a collaboration of 10 UK police forces based upon their common use of the Niche Records Management System (Niche RMS365). The initial aims of the Minerva Programme were to promote best practice between member forces and to create an agreed approach to the use of RMS.

2.13. The Minerva Programme is governed by a Section 22A agreement (often referred to as a Section 22 or S22). This is a legal mechanism pursuant to Section 22A of the Police Act 1996 (as amended)[4] which enables chief officers of police and local policing bodies as defined in that Act to make an agreement to collaborate and to discharge their functions where it is in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of their own and other police force areas to do so.

2.14. The latest S22, between the 28 member forces including Dorset, came into effect in June 2024, and the Minerva Management Board is chaired by the Avon and Somerset Chief Constable, with the Avon and Somerset PCC representing the interests of PCCs and their equivalents.

National Police Chief's Council

2.15. On behalf of policing, the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) undertake a range of collaborative functions, which include the development and hosting of some national technology capabilities. This is part of a programme arising from the Home Office desire to actively reduce its own national technology hosting responsibilities and move these over to policing as a sector.

2.16. NPCC works with key partners such as the College of Policing and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and is a membership body funded by Chief Constables and supported by a dedicated leadership team[5].

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[4] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/16/section/22A

[5] https://www.npcc.police.uk/About-Us/structure-and-membership/

SINGLE ONLINE HOME

The NPCC Digital Public Contact Programme (DPC) is responsible for the national implementation of the Single Online Home (SOH) platform – the digital contact platform (primarily a website) that enables members of the public to contact individual forces at any time and report crimes, incidents, or pass on intelligence or other information.

DPC took over the established police.uk[6] platform from the Home Office Digital Policing Portfolio as part of the drive to reduce Home Office technology hosting. A mobile version of the site was developed, which provided information about local policing teams, crime prevention advice, and offering detailed crime and outcome data at the local level.

Parts of this platform were then developed into the national SOH platform, which is now available across all 43 police forces, freeing up local time and resource, as well as reducing administration and maintenance by providing a consistent platform across all forces that allows each one to benefit from further enhancements and improvements to the platform over time.

As with other nationally developed technology capabilities, whilst individual forces did provide specific input on how systems might be developed, the final platform is the product of the input from 43 forces, and as a result is not necessarily tailored to the needs of each individual force.

Whilst the nationwide introduction on SOH was mandated, individual Chief Constables were able to determine when their force should onboard, and as a result Dorset Police and Devon and Cornwall Police opted to wait until a later tranche to benefit from the experience of others in implementing the new system.

Dorset Police fully transitioned to the SOH platform in early 2023, and the system is now routinely managing a far greater volume of public contact than was received by the previous systems. Dorset will pay an annual charge of £94,628 for SOH in 2025/26, out of a national total of just under £8m, and an annual charge of £12,492 in 2025/26 for police.uk, out of a national total of a little over £1.1m.

3.   GOVERNANCE

3.1.   Locally, however, the governance of Force, alliance and regional technology capabilities are much more accessible and operate in a very structured manner.

3.2.   At a Dorset level, the governance of this enabling service sits with the Strategic Change Board. This is an Alliance Board, given that the ICT is an alliance function collaborated across both Dorset Police and Devon and Cornwall Police. The senior responsible officers for each Force are the Deputy Chief Constables, and Dorset OPCC is represented by the Chief Executive, whom is one of the Board's longest serving members.

3.3.   Strategic Change Board is informed by a series of boards including the Technology Board, Continuous Improvement Board, Efficiency and Productivity Board and Innovation Board, the majority of which are attended by members of the OPCC senior management team. Strategic Change Board then reports into the Working Together Board, which is attended by the two Chief Constables and two PCCs from each force area.

3.4.   Decisions relating to funding technology initiatives are made by the Resource Control Board, which is attended by the OPCC Chief Executive and Treasurer, and the Capital Strategy

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[6] https://www.police.uk/

Group, which is chaired by the Treasurer. For further financial assurance, due to the value of new and renewed technology contracts, the established financial delegation limits set out in the OPCC Code of Corporate Governance[7] mean that these are typically signed off by the OPCC Chief Executive.

3.5. At a regional level, governance sits with the South West Police Collaboration Strategic Board, which sets the strategic direction on all regional collaborations and is attended by all five Chief Constables and five PCCs from the south-west force areas. This Board is informed by several regional boards and meetings between regional Chief Officer counterparts.

STRATEGIC CHANGE BOARD

Formerly PRISM Board, this is a monthly meeting managed by the two Alliance Deputy Chief Constables. Once the board has made a decision, specialist business change resources are allocated to ensure the pace of delivery can meet the expectations of the business.

Business change will review what impact these decisions will have on the wider resource commitments already in place and will continue to manage demand and prioritisation through the steering group to gain a clear understanding of the critical pathway to deliver change.

Consideration is given to how environmental context may affect the portfolio moving forward, including Government announcements which often necessitate adjustments in budgets.

Assessments of both financial and operational risk are ongoing, and the portfolio has a discipline of ongoing engagement with project executives and senior leadership to keep delivery on track and escalate any concerns as they arise so considerations around strategic importance, dependencies, time/urgency, and cashable and non-cashable benefits can be kept under constant review.

At the time of writing, there are 33 separate projects managed within this board's portfolio, some of which will be detailed in section 4.

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4. CASE STUDIES

4.1. Recognising the possibility of falling into a level of detail that would complicate scrutiny, this section will be given over to outlining a small number of examples in more detail.

4.2. In the first of which, technology has been implemented and is in a steady state of delivering business and public benefit. In the second, technology has been implemented and the initial benefits are deemed to be positive but sufficient time has not yet passed for a full benefits realisation to be completed. Finally, in the third, the need for improvement has been identified and agreed, and a technology solution has been scoped and commissioned, but this has not yet been implemented.

4.3. In this way it is hoped that an overview of the full development cycle can be provided, which demonstrates the steps taken at each point to identify how the success of the investment is being / will be monitored in terms of value for money, improved performance, and impact on delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.
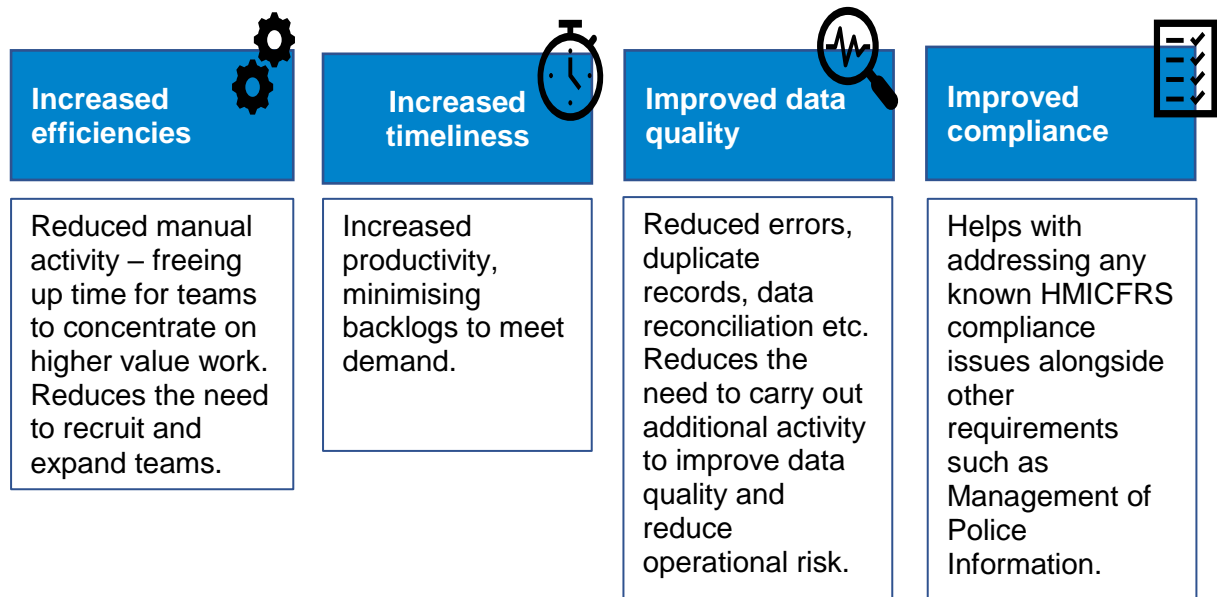
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[7]https://dorsetpccpolice.s3.amazonaws.com/Documents/Information%20Hub%20/Our%20policies%20and%20procedures/Code%20of%20Corporate%20Governance%20-%20September%202023.pdf

A. Robotic Process Automation

4.4. Almost every business process involves an element of repetitive, manual effort to which the member of staff adds little business value, and policing is no exception. Dorset Police is a large complex public sector organisation with multiple processes and work streams that rely on consistency, quality, accountability, and compliance.

4.5. At the same time, with demand for police services outstripping supply, augmenting the human workforce with digital workers has become a strategic imperative for forces to ensure they are making every penny count and maximising taxpayer value for money.

4.6. It has been evidenced from other police forces exploring opportunities on behalf of policing nationally, that the implementation of well managed and detailed strategies around Robotic Process Automation (RPA) can boost productivity, contribute to cost reduction targets and allow forces to refocus on delivering critical public services.

4.7. RPA is the automation of business processes using a 'digital workforce' which when trained, mimic the activities of existing staff. RPA reduces the amount of time staff spend on repetitive and routine activities, allowing more time to be spent on interaction with the public and jobs requiring a greater degree of complex problem solving or human judgement. This has a commensurate benefit on the welfare of staff and allows for the development of new and more value-adding skills.

4.8. RPA is not artificial intelligence. RPA frees up staff from undertaking routine and repetitive tasks by creating a streamlined and efficient process, whilst the overall decisions still sit with staff. For example, RPA can effectively eliminate the incidences of staff double keying the same information into different systems to check whether a particular individual or address has a record, or automatically produce and issue letters or other correspondence using standard templates without any intervention.

4.9. In 2020, the then Alliance Firearms and Explosives Licensing Unit was identified as a suitable testbed to determine the potential viability of exploiting RPA within the Alliance. Many of the tasks undertaken by the team involved querying multiple systems, aggregating, and checking routine information, and sending repetitive requests for information. A six-month proof-of-concept was undertaken which highlighted considerable likely benefit of automation and highlighted that should these opportunities also be implemented right across the Force; a significant cumulative benefit could be realised.

4.10. As a result of the proof-of-concept, in 2021, it was agreed to move into Phase 2 with the intention to iteratively scale over a five-year period, creating an internal centre of excellence for RPA delivery. This involved identifying a supplier with which the Alliance could work over a six-month period to rapidly scope 12 'quick win' automations which addressed challenges within critical areas of business delivery. The supplier would also help the Alliance determine its strategic approach to RPA, with the end goal of being completely self-sufficient and able to undertake our own automations as part of the five-year plan.

4.11. Phase 3 of this plan, for delivery during 2022/23, therefore involved the supplier mentoring and training Alliance staff on RPA processes and methodology, with a view of the internal team starting to play more significant roles in the delivery of automations during Phase 4, which was the formal handover from the supplier to the Alliance centre of excellence. This was duly achieved during 2023/24.

4.12. By 2024/25, Phase 5 was well underway, which reflects a business-as-usual state with the internal Alliance team working with the business to identify and scope opportunities for automation, and to begin to realise the expected benefits of RPA.

4.13. From a governance perspective, this work has been led through the Strategic Change Board, and at the outset of this work the expected costs and benefits were considered in detail through this board, including by the OPCC Chief Executive. These costs were then passed to the Resource Control Board, where they were signed off by the OPCC Chief Executive and Treasurer. The headline benefits of the RPA programme are as follows:

Increased efficiencies	Increased timeliness	Improved data quality	Improved compliance
Reduced manual activity – freeing up time for teams to concentrate on higher value work. Reduces the need to recruit and expand teams.	Increased productivity, minimising backlogs to meet demand.	Reduced errors, duplicate records, data reconciliation etc. Reduces the need to carry out additional activity to improve data quality and reduce operational risk.	Helps with addressing any known HMICFRS compliance issues alongside other requirements such as Management of Police Information.

4.14. A benefits logic map was completed which detailed specific benefits around these four pillars, although it was recognised that the contribution each automation has on the strategic outcomes will vary, dependent upon the process being automated.

4.15. Aside from the strategic benefits, several opportunities for efficiency savings to be realised, were also identified, including:

- Redeploying staff onto other high value adding work or into other areas;
- Cost avoidance through reduction in bids to increase establishment;
- Budgetary savings through natural wastage: non-replacement of leavers; and
- Budgetary savings where resources cannot easily be redeployed or are no longer required this could lead to cashable savings.

4.16. These benefits were successfully realised through Phases 2 and 3, and by November 2023, 20 separate automations were live across the Alliance, with circa £113k of economic benefits having been realised, the bulk of which related to police officer time being saved. At the same time, around £89k of non-cashable efficiency savings were made, and around £120k worth of costs were avoided by improved and more timely processes.

Benefits Categorisation

- Economic benefits are benefits resulting in financial improvements, releasing cash, increased income, or the better use of funds (for example operating cost reductions).
- Efficiency benefits are benefits which allow the organisation to do more for the same or the same with less (for example processing more information but with the same number of people).
- Effectiveness benefits are benefits which result in the organisation doing things better or to a higher standard (for example increased public satisfaction).
- Cost avoidance benefits are costs not currently incurred but anticipated in the future (for example negating the need for future recruitment to backfill gaps in delivery).

4.17. Aligned to the benefits headlines illustrated in paragraph 4.13, at this point benefits were seen across all pillars – with 17% of benefits realising efficiencies, 26% improving timeliness, 15% improving data quality, and 22% improving compliance. A further 18% of benefits related to a reduction in risk, and the final 2% related to cost avoidance.
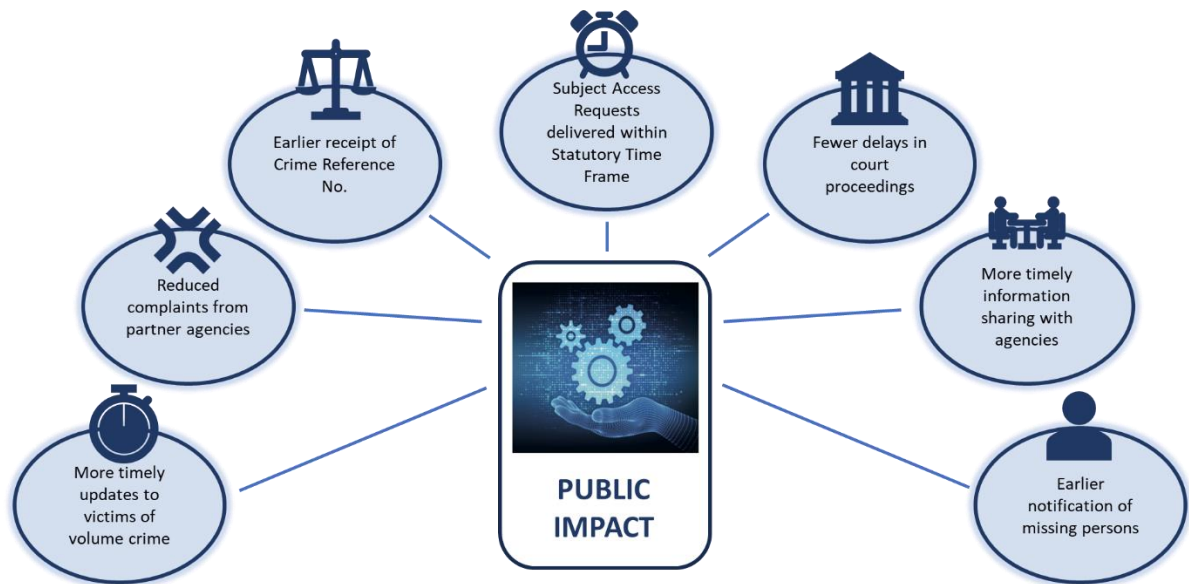
4.18. Some of these initial automations included:

- Production and issue of letters to victims of crime, in accordance with the Victims Code of Practice. This automation freed up a Victims Bureau Officer and part of a Sergeant role to undertake more value-added tasks. (Went live in December 2022)

- Recording of a variety of markers and warnings on crime and incident databases, once specialist investigations or tasking had completed, e.g. domestic abuse public protection notice markers. This automation saw time efficiencies for the Safeguarding Referral Officers roles being realised, immediately reducing the backlog and enabling a more timely and improved service to be delivered. (Went live in March 2023)

- Recording and closedown of crimes and incidents determined as having no opportunity for further action to be taken. This automation contributed to less police officer overtime within local policing areas but did not correlate to a direct budget reduction as the goal was an improvement in efficiency. (Went live in March 2023)

- Recording of and supply of investigative material as part of court disclosures. This automation resulted in significant time efficiency for the Discloser Officer roles, freeing up staff to make decisions and quality assure material being disclosed, further enhancing compliance rates. (Went live in July 2023)

- Recording of annual leave approvals from local systems to the central HR system. This automation saved significant administrative time for HR Operations staff, allowing some cost savings to be taken as staff could be freed up to undertake roles elsewhere. (Went live in November 2023)

4.19. Throughout Phase 4 and into Phase 5, the Alliance became more sophisticated at mapping and assessing benefits, and several emergent opportunities arose:

- Data quality issues were highlighted that were not known prior to automation,
- Automation was increasingly being used to smooth the variability of demand, with more robots being activated during peak summer demand, for example,
- Those areas that had not yet benefitted from automation due to a lack of supervisor capacity to help automation development were focused on to ensure opportunity was equally spread through the Force,
- The RPA Project Board created a new prioritisation process and framework to ensure the equality of opportunity, and
- The impact of automation on staff was better understood, and due to the overwhelming positive feedback, further opportunities were identified all the time.

4.20. Importantly, whilst the initial benefits pillars as shown in paragraph 4.13 were largely internally focused, improved processes and understanding allowed the benefit to the public to be better tracked. These include:

The central node reads "PUBLIC IMPACT" surrounded by: Earlier receipt of Crime Reference No.; Subject Access Requests delivered within Statutory Time Frame; Fewer delays in court proceedings; Reduced complaints from partner agencies; More timely information sharing with agencies; More timely updates to victims of volume crime; Earlier notification of missing persons.

4.21. Overall, by July 2024, RPA was forecast to have reached a breakeven point in terms of investment – with the then 24 automations in place having been implemented at a total cost of £2.3m and being forecast to deliver £2.4m of cashable and non-cashable savings by 2026/27. This savings figure was quite conservative given that they assume that no further automations would go live (which was not the case), and that the existing automations would not continue to scale up and deliver ever increasing savings (which was also not the case). It should also be noted that the automation cost represents a one-off cost, whereas the automation savings are accrued annually.

4.22. Overall, RPA should be regarded as a successful implementation of a challenging and complex technology capability. Dorset Police has, over the past 5 years taken a proof-of-concept idea and carefully and incrementally built its own internal capability and resources to undertake work that both saves money, improves efficiency, supports staff removing repetitive tasks, and improves public outcomes, timeliness, and service.

4.23. RPA is now business as usual, and established processes and workflows exist to help individual teams identify what areas of their business might be automated and to engage with the automation team to support the realisation of that vision. Currently, OPCC is engaging with the automation team to explore opportunities to improve its public contact workflow.

B. Operation Edison

4.24. Technology has, in this paper, been described as an enabling service. It is important to recognise its place in policing as a means to an end and not an end in itself. To illustrate this, the second case study is an approach that describes the process by which Dorset Police hopes to simultaneously streamline its processes, optimise its operating (staffing) model, identify opportunities to remove internal inefficiencies through technology and innovation – Op Edison – all with the goal of freeing up resources to better manage its emergency and non-emergency call handling and dispatch.

4.25. Starting at the beginning, in August 2022, the PCC raised a formal PCC Challenge with the then Chief Constable recognising that the long-term performance data suggested a declining position in the servicing of calls for immediate service and requesting that a deeper explanation and, if necessary, reparative plan was provided.

4.26. Following on from this Challenge the Force launched a programme to complete this comprehensive review of Force resources, systems, infrastructure, and contact channels.

This led to the creation of new processes and new performance targets, but also recognised some real challenges in the way that these data were aggregated across forces and demonstrated that the data across forces was not accurately comparable, a conclusion also supported by OPCC.

4.27. These initial improvements did not focus on technology as a starting point, as it was recognised that processes should be addressed first to maximise the benefit of improved workflows before additional investment was scoped.

4.28. By way of example, a key improvement was the recognition that when dealing with an emergency call, the call handler was required to fully complete the call log before transferring to a radio dispatcher for an officer to be tasked. A process improvement was made that allowed call handlers to request an emergency dispatch whilst the call log was still being completed. This improvement went live and immediately realised improvements in dispatch time, which were further improved when a small technology improvement of an auto call transfer function was made.

4.29. Subsequent work uncovered a legacy practice whereby calls that were initially recorded as 'Grade 2' incidents (and so requiring an attendance within 60 minutes) but were then upgraded to a 'Grade 1' incident as the result of subsequently received information (and so requiring an attendance within 20 minutes) did not have the response time reset. This meant that emergency response times were impacted by incidents which were initially recorded as a standard response. A small tweak to systems meant that these incidents that changed gradings were immediately identified and could be attended in line with the new grading.

4.30. With these, and other people, process, and policy improvements made to achieve the desired impacts, more significant investment opportunities were considered that would further enhance call handling and response times and improve overall services to the public. Some of the more recent technology work under Op Edison includes:

4.31. **GoodSAM** is a bespoke platform for emergency services to communicate with members of the public in a safe and secure way that meets policing and courts evidential standards. Initially trialled within the control room, as of June 2024, GoodSAM was available to all officers and staff within investigative roles.

4.32. This platform allows officers and investigators to engage in a video call with members of the public, but due to the secure nature of the platform, to also take victim or witness statements without requiring either party to travel, to receive digital files, photos, or videos, or even for the member of the public to share their phone's video and audio feed with the individual officer for evidential purposes.

4.33. **Investigation and Intelligence Assessment Centre** (IIAC) is a new operating model that went live in July 2024, following significant planning and implementation, that enhances how Dorset Police supports victims of crime. On annual basis the Force sees over 175,000 incidents and 50,000 crimes reported which are all carefully logged on crime and incident recording systems. These logs are often handled by multiple people over multiple months, often only for no lines of enquiry to be identified and for the case to be closed.

4.34. However, feedback from victims was that if a crime is not likely to see a positive outcome, they would prefer to know this upfront to manage their expectations and for the case to be closed earlier, rather than for investigators to attempt to explore opportunities that are not there in an attempt to do right by them. (See paragraph 4.39 for further detail).

4.35. IIAC is a new team created within the contact management team to finalise those crimes at the first point of contact that have not been identified for any one of the various tasking, investigative, safeguarding, or other actions that are available, which would both improve

victim engagement, and free up investigator time to focus on those cases where there are valid lines of enquiry.

4.36.   Of course, should additional information be subsequently received, then cases can be followed-up on, and the IIAC team will also add any intelligence and investigative information to systems that will help other cases, supported by a range of new triaging and live time intelligence tools that have been developed to support this new function.

4.37.   **Enhanced Video Response** (EVR) is an alternative to the traditional physical attendance of officers and investigators to victims and witness locations, that has been shown to reduce victim wait times, increase support for the criminal justice process, enhance victim satisfaction, and achieve cost efficiencies.

4.38.   When a call for service is made to Dorset Police and the matter is assessed as a 'Grade 3' deployment (and so requiring an engagement within 48 hours), the call handler will ask the caller a series of questions to establish if the matter is eligible to dealt with by EVR. If the matter is suitable, the case is passed to the EVR team, who will then contact the caller via GoodSAM to obtain full details and conduct any primary investigation and safeguarding action that is appropriate.

4.39.   EVR was launched in Dorset off the back of an extensive and successful trial. The trial data showed that, using EVR:

- Victim satisfaction increased from 31% to 74%
- Positive outcomes improved from 1.5% versus 4.9%
- Arrests and voluntary attendance increased from 6.3% to 10.6%
- Use of Outcome 16 (where there is a named offender, but the victim does not wish to engage) fell from 36% to 21%.

4.40.   At the same time, with EVR, the average response times for Grade 3 incidents reduced significantly, from 21 days to 2 days. Furthermore, this increase in performance on Grade 3 incidents has also not been to the detriment of Grade 1 and Grade 2 deployment times, where faster responses from patrol officers are still being seen, as they are more able to focus on those high harm and immediate risk incidents.

4.41.   **Pronto** is, in simple terms, an app that is installed on Force mobile devices to allow officers and staff to access existing systems such as Niche and the PNC, as well as complete and issue digital forms such as stop and search and vehicle tickets without relying on paper-based forms or having to take notes and return to a fixed base to complete the necessary information on desktop systems.

4.42.   Whilst Pronto has been in use in Dorset since 2021, and indeed a Pronto biometric fingerprint reader has been available in every operational police vehicle since late 2021, it is under Op Edison where additional enhancements have been made, allowing officers to more fully operate in the field. For example, in the last year, tasking and deployment integration has been improved in Pronto meaning that officers log onto the app at the start of their shift and can see the tasks that have been assigned to them, complete with links to relevant incident logs (rather than having to manually enter these). Officers will also be able to see which resources have been allocated to which tasks to allow for fluid decisions to be made should situations change.

4.43.   Officers are also able to take photos using their mobile device which are now directly timestamped and added into the relevant incident log, without having to manually complete this task. Similarly, victim and witness statements can now be sent to members of the public via Pronto for them to sign.

4.44. The use of Pronto is tracked, and feedback is constantly taken to ensure that the new enhancements are working as expected. For example, in late August the updated version of Pronto went live which contained almost 30 functionality tweaks and improvements that addressed issues that had been identified by officers and staff.

4.45. There was over a quarter of a million Pronto usages in October 2024, an increase of 13% on the previous month, and increase of over 500% since October 2023. Importantly, these are not just tasking, and crime and incident checks, but also reflect a significant increase in the proportion of proactive policing activity being undertaken using mobile devices – including a 15% increase in the completion of public protection notices, a 29% increase in the completion of witness statements, and a 52% increase in the completion of stop and search forms using Pronto in recent months.

4.46. Overall, Op Edison sets out how Dorset Police has been successfully working to optimise its processes and workflows and to identify how the delivery of these might be enhanced through technology. Presently, this focus on exploring opportunities for improvement within call handling and dispatch continues, and all things being equal (specifically including resources), it is expected that call handling and attendance performance will continue to improve.

C. Digital Evidence Management System

4.47. The final case study considers how Dorset Police is using technology to manage a problem that many of us experience within our own lives – the management, control and systemisation of data and information that can impact us from multiple sources, in different formats, and of different quality, relevance and priority.

4.48. A key function of policing is the management of data and information to an evidential standard. That data can exist as text, image, audio, or video and all of these various types of information must be securely held and linked to the relevant crime, incident, intelligence, person, location, and more record whilst being easily viewable across multiple systems (including on mobile devices). Historic data must be managed alongside emerging and incomplete data, and all of this information must be readily editable for sharing with the public, partners and the courts as needed. The data must also adhere to the various relevant standards, including the Management of Police Information, and allow for the appropriate deletion and retention of records as needed.

4.49. The investment in a Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS) is in the current financial context, however, a difficult choice given the significant savings that Dorset Police needs to achieve both within year, and over the next medium-term financial period.

4.50. It should come as no surprise to hear then, that the consideration of a purchase of a DEMS has been ongoing for some time, and whilst the Strategic Change Board has been considering options, timescales, and relative prioritisation of its programme of work, the South West Police Procurement Service (SWPPS) which operates on behalf of the five regional forces, was commissioned to undertake due-diligence around the selection of a supplier for a new DEMS.

4.51. Police procurement for the purchase of cloud-based computing services is managed through the Crown Commercial Service platform, G-Cloud, and the due diligence process began with using this catalogue to identify which approved suppliers could deliver a DEMS to the local specification required. In due course, including through an examination of the cost information provided by the suppliers, a preferred supplier was identified (which currently provides similar services to 19 other forces in England and Wales).

4.52. An in-person due-diligence session was then hosted between the supplier, SWPPS and technical representatives from each of the five regional forces. Leads from Dorset Police and

Devon & Cornwall Police had the opportunity to consider the technical requirements and opportunities for data sharing both across the forces, and the wider region.

4.53. Around March of this year, with the business need and the business benefits having been very clearly set out and communicated, a series of briefing sessions were convened for senior decision makers including the Assistant Chief Constable, the Force Director of Finance, and the Chief Executive. These sessions whilst covering the scope and operation of the proposed DEMS, largely and correctly focused on affordability.

4.54. It is important to note that, at this point, whilst a preferred supplier had been identified, the decision to procure, or not, was still subject to the completion and agreement of a detailed business case – there was absolutely no obligation.

4.55. Confidence in expected costs is perhaps the most important factor at this point as whilst suppliers might suggest what the costs should be the reality can sometimes be different. The benefit then of working with a supplier that had previously worked with many other forces meant that it was possible to achieve a comparatively high confidence in the expected costs, based on the experiences of other forces.

4.56. However supplier costs are only one small part of the picture, and internal implementation costs, including the cost of achieving interoperability with existing force systems, of loading existing and historic records into the new DEMS, of freeing up resource to support the implementation and training these individuals in the operation of the new systems, plus a range of third party costs to other suppliers for integration and technical advice were all assessed over a five year period – to establish the expected total cost of implementation.

4.57. At this point, the Force Director of Finance and the OPCC Treasurer worked to identify a combination of revenue and capital spend that could be proposed to meet the cost of this implementation over the next five years, in line with the current provision of the medium-term financial statement (MTFS). This, unsurprisingly, showed a shortfall in the MTFS provision across each of the five years.

4.58. At that stage, options were explored for a more streamlined implementation, as well as an incremental, or phased, implementation that allowed for the DEMS to be installed 'block-by-block' over time. The Chief Executive, whilst mindful of the incremental approach, was also cautious about guarding against being left with an incomplete system which would not ultimately derive the strategic business benefits that were deemed necessary for this implementation (better management of data, more efficient capture of CCTV and other public and third party evidence, enhanced evidential integrity, improved casefile building, and a better two-flow of information and file sharing with CPS). This position was agreed by the other senior leaders and led to a more streamlined implementation approach being proposed.

4.59. Whilst Members will want to understand the financial detail of this procurement, it cannot be shared at this point in the procurement cycle.

4.60. Following this intervention, the Strategic Change Board received updated and more affordable costs for the implementation of DEMS and agreed that both Dorset Police and Devon and Cornwall Police progress the implementation of a new DEMS, with the expected go live date of December 2025.

4.61. The estimated forecast benefits from the implementation of a DEMS (for Dorset) are a reduction of around 3,000 person hours in CCTV processing per annum, around 2,300 person hours in casefile compilation per annum, and around 300 person hours in casefile review per annum. These identified benefits savings are viewed by operational representatives as a cautious estimate and very much at the lower end of the potential savings available.

4.62.   The introduction of a DEMS will also give the opportunity to remove several existing systems, either partially or completely. The benefits realisation for DEMS will be assessed across the following pillars, each of which articulates how the benefits will be measured:

- Improved access to digital evidence,
- Reduced time spent collecting, accessing, and processing digital media,
- Improved security for storage for digital media,
- Reduced time from victim report to outcome,
- Improved evidential integrity, and
- Reduced costs.

One disbenefit has been identified, as police officers and PCSOs are currently sent to collect CCTV and other digital evidence meaning that they are more visible in local communities and businesses. DEMS will remove the need for the physical collection of such digital evidence, meaning that policing will be less visible. This will be mitigated though recognising that officers and staff will be freed up from this collection task and better able to attend other jobs.

4.63.   Overall, this final example sets out the process through which a technology implementation is agreed upon, and the opportunities for OPCC support in achieving better public outcomes and more efficient use of public money. Members will continue to receive updates on the implementation of this exciting and important technology capability, particularly on the realisation of public benefits.

5.   HORIZON SCANNING: FUTURES

5.1.   The opening to this paper set out that the history of policing has been one of constant scientific and technological evolution driven by a relentless desire to stay one step ahead of criminals and protect the public. And just as that was true in the past, so it will be true in the future. New crimes and new ways of offending will necessitate new policing and investigative methods. Increasing public use of technology will increase technology-enabled crime and require a technology-enabled policing response.

5.2.   From facial recognition, which can help spot suspects and missing people, to predictive analytics that can identify patterns invisible to humans and suggest where and when crimes are likely to occur, artificial intelligence provides huge opportunities for policing. However, without sufficient transparency and oversight, particularly to guard against bias, there is a risk of injustice and a reduction in public trust and confidence.

Facial Recognition

5.3.   Retrospective Facial Recognition is now business as usual for policing, given that the Police National Database also includes a facial search facility. In the 12 months to June 2024, Dorset Police accessed the database 2,030 times, which is broadly in line with the rate of usage in other forces.

5.4.   Live Facial Recognition (LFR) enables police to identify wanted people. LFR essentially does what police officers do currently, but far more quickly, and with greater accuracy. All LFR deployments must be targeted, intelligence-led, time-bound, and geographically limited, and before a deployment, police must inform the public where they intend to use the technology and where they can obtain more information on its use. If the system does not make a match, the biometric data gathered by the system is deleted immediately and automatically.

5.5.   Presently, LFR is being trialled by a small number of forces on behalf of policing (South Wales Police, Metropolitan Police Service, Essex Police, and Northamptonshire Police). Potential options for the exploration of LFR use, and the associated community impact and concern

will be considered by the regional Chief Constables, PCCs and Chief Executives at an upcoming South West Police Collaboration Strategic Board.

Artificial Intelligence

5.6. Whilst policing is developing its own capabilities around LFR, for example, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has increasingly become an indispensable part of everyday life with consumer examples available across a wide variety of platforms that policing might be able to exploit over time. As a result, therefore, policing is not necessarily leading the development of AI, and tends to rely on the innovation of others.

5.7. By way of example, over the summer, Dorset Police participated in an 'Innovation Sandpit' event at Bournemouth University, along with reps from other regional forces. At the event several policing challenges were discussed, and academics talked through their research and considered whether AI could hold the key to solving some of them. As a result of this, a partnership between Bournemouth University and Dorset Police is being considered to develop, trial, test and assess new AI initiatives to try and solve some of the more pressing policing issues.

5.8. Whilst this initiative is not finalised, it does demonstrate the kind of approach being taken to the development of AI initiatives. This approach is currently being considered through the Innovation Board, of which the Chief Executive is the co-chair.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. As has been stated throughout, technology is a means to an end, and hopefully this paper has illustrated how its use and implementation is carefully considered as part of whole system improvement plans that account for all facets of policing operations.

6.2. At a strategic level, Dorset Police and the Dorset OPCC are well placed from an alliance, regional and national perspective to take advantage of technology developments as they arise, rather than seeking to play a leading part in actively developing technology ourselves.

6.3. This continues to be a well governed endeavour, with OPCC represented at the strategic decision-making level and taking an active role in shaping the use and implementation of technology within Dorset Police, in line with the Police and Crime plan priorities.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1. Members are recommended to note the paper.

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