

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2025

Present: Cllrs Alasdair Keddie (Chair), Mytton, Peter Sidaway, Tony Trent, Simon Gibson, Andrew Starr and Carl Woode

Apologies: Cllrs Patrick Canavan, David Flagg, Louise Bown and Louie O'Leary

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

Simon Bullock (Chief Executive, OPCC), George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Marc Eyre (Service Manager for Assurance), Adam Harrold (OPCC Director of Operations), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Megan Rochester (Senior Democratic Services Officer), David Sidwick (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Julie Strange (OPCC Chief Finance Officer).

36. Endorsement of new Co-opted member

Proposed by Cllr Peter Sidaway, seconded by Cllr Tony Trent.

Decision: that Ben Sargeaunt was appointed as Co-Opted member of the PCP.

37. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11th December 2024 were confirmed and signed.

38. Declarations of Interest

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

39. Public Participation

Questions had been received from Ms Judy Sands and Councillors Julie Robinson and Sara Armstrong.

The members of the public and councillors were thanked for their questions. The PCC highlighted the responsibility of addressing antisocial behaviour, which rested with both the Police and Local Authority. Noting that incidents had decreased by 32% overall, with a further reduction of 9% reported this year. Dorset Police had been proactive in managing hundreds of public contacts and the PCC expressed

gratitude for the information provided by community members. However, it was essential to acknowledge that operational and financial constraints limited the extent of immediate action. Ongoing investigations may be taking place, and the implementation of enhanced video response capabilities across Dorset signified their commitment to this issue. To support residents, contact and engagement leaflets were available, aimed at fostering better communication with the local policing team and residents. Community members were encouraged to engage directly with the Police and Crime Commissioner and to utilize the available leaflets, which were designed to reassure them regarding the proactive measures being taken in their area.

The Police and Crime Commissioner responded to Cllr Armstrongs questions. He emphasized that the provision of housing must not be viewed as a policing matter, and assurance was sought from the Local Authority regarding this issue. It was suggested that correspondence be initiated with Local Authority representatives to address these concerns. The operational status of Maple is to remain intact, with ongoing efforts to recommission services, ultimately leading to the establishment of a new independent service aimed at providing enhanced support for victims, including the option for self-referral. The PCC anticipated sharing further updates with the panel as developments occur. It was noted that public services were currently facing significant funding challenges, yet progress is being made, with some initiatives from Bobby Van being integrated into the response framework.

Furthermore, there was a commitment to improving outcomes in technology-enabled crimes, with domestic abuse advisers receiving specialized training that encompasses coercive control. Annual vulnerability training ensures that external sources were utilized effectively to bolster the capacity of trained first points of contact. Statistics concerning stalking incidents from April to December 2024 indicate a 7.9% positive outcome rate, highlighting an area for continued development and improvement. Training programs specifically addressed the implications of stalking, harassment, and technology offences, recognizing the long-lasting impact these crimes have on victims. The PCC remained dedicated to the practice of target hardening as a preventative measure.

The Police and Crime Commissioner responded to the member of the public's question regarding their concern about making every penny count and set out why personal security work had been completed at the PCC's private property.

No further questions or petitions had been received.

40. Budget Precept Financial Year 2025/26

The Chairman advised that the Panel should consider the PCC's proposed budget requirement and independently scrutinize its appropriateness. The options open to the Panel were to either support, not to support or veto the proposal.

The Police and Crime Commissioner introduced the report and framed the strategic need.

The Chief Constable provided a comprehensive oversight from the point of view of operations (00:40:35 on the recording). Commendable efforts had been noted across various departments, with positive feedback reflecting the commitment to delivering fair policing services to the community in Dorset. Nevertheless, the Chief Constable acknowledged the ongoing financial challenges, highlighting the necessity of judicious budgeting and the significant pressure faced by the policing team due to substantial budget cuts. With a focus on maximizing resources, the team was exploring innovative solutions, such as renegotiating contracts and leveraging technology, while also regrettably reducing the number of policing posts by 72 and anticipating a further reduction of 110 posts if unsuccessful with the proposed budget. It was clear that decisions regarding service delivery were being approached with care, fully recognizing their impact on public safety. Despite these challenges, the Chief Constable proudly noted several key improvements and a decline in crime rates throughout Dorset, reinforcing the commitment to effective policing.

The Chief Finance Officer then set out additional information which had been received since the report was published. The Final Settlement had been received and confirmed the numbers contained within the report, except for the Neighbourhood Policing Grant. This had been doubled; however, expenditure was also assumed to increase by the same amount. (01:06:16 on the recording). Further to the report previously circulated, it had been confirmed that there were no required changes, with the exception of the neighbourhood policing grant, which had increased, however, expenditure would have still risen. The main table affected in the report is shown at section 3.11. Appendix 1 to the report is also changed and the updated versions of both are appended to these minutes. In conclusion, the Chief Finance Officer had assured the committee that the level of reserves was adequate and that the budget proposals for 2025/26 were robust.

The Director of Operations shared the results from the public consultation that had been run between December 2024 and January 2025 (01:11:11 on recording).

The Police and Crime Commissioner reminded the Panel that Dorset Police was the second lowest recipient of the national funding formula, and that over half of the Force was paid for by the people of Dorset, whereas in other parts of the country it was 20%.

Questions from the Priority Leads - 01:21:35 recording (attached at appendix 3).

- Assurance that there was a proportionate increase in service delivery performance.
- Welfare of front-line officers and civilian staff.

Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The PCC responded in detail to questions in relation to:

- How the commissioner held the police accountable.
- Timeframes to meet objectives whilst dealing with financial constraints
- Principle of public consultation and survey responses
- Pay ward and contingency.
- Quantifying financial risk
- Level of support from Dorset MP's.
- Queried referendum opportunities as a separate survey to the precept

- Wording of questionnaire
- How many respondents were willing to pay above what had been requested by Dorset Police.
- Service degradation

Decision: that the Police and Crime Panel support the PCC's proposal to increase the precept for 2025/26 to £96,077,904, equivalent to a Band D charge, an increase of £14 per annum or £1.16 per month.

Decision: In accordance with procedural rule 8.1 a vote was taken, the committee agreed to exceed the 3-hour meeting time limit.

10-minute comfort break 13:00 – 13:10.

41. **Q3 Monitoring Report**

The PCC gave an update on progress against the police and crime plan.

Priority one - Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour – 03:04:45 on the recording

Total crime had reduced in Dorset. Year to date ASB was down by 2% and funding had been approved for Christchurch Harbour Watch. There had been an increase in business crime. The PCC talked about road safety campaigns, highlighting work towards reducing speed in local areas. He also discussed ongoing projects to support vulnerable residents.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members (03:09:35 on the recording).

- Methods used to support those reluctant to report crime.
- Measurement of success of the pilot programme.
- Appropriate steps taken to speeding letters from community speed watch.
- Engagement with residents, particularly young people.
- Communication between those reporting crime and the police to be updated on the progress or the appropriate steps taken.

Priority two - Make Policing More Visible and Connected – 03:24:46 on the recording.

The latest statistics indicated an improvement in the number of police calls received, with response times for call handling reaching an impressive 92%. However, there remained room for enhancement, particularly with the average answer time. It is noteworthy that 73% of calls were answered within 77 seconds, with ongoing efforts to reduce the remaining 27%. Improvements are actively being pursued within the control centre, where a neighbourhood engagement board has been established to assess commitments and prioritize actions. These initiatives had led to significant positive changes across Dorset, notably through the introduction of community contact points and a mobile police office, which has

further bolstered community engagement and accessibility. The next steps included continued monitoring of response times and community initiatives.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members (03:30:33 on the recording)

- Online availability of Neighbourhood Engagement Commitments.
- How the input was gathered from communities and residents.

Priority three - Fight Violent Crime and High Harm – 03:33:26 on the recording.

Serious violence was down, and victim support had increased to 10 years. The different types of domestic abuse were highlighted and the Police and Crime Commissioner highlighted that all needed to be looked at, exposed and dealt with. The PCC informed members that there was an approved continuation of funding for prison leavers, addressing issues of perpetrators to change their behaviours and to prevent reoffending. Operation Scorpion continued and different programmes for drug education were introduced to look at different approaches and communication. The PCC discussed Operation Encompass which had been introduced to primary schools as well as secondary. Knife crime numbers were low but the number of teenagers carrying was concerning. Stalking was now a concern, particularly online and the PCC was looking at ways to reduce the risk.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members (03:40:34 on the recording).

- Encouraging to see the responses to domestic violence.
- Queried whether the drug educational programmes were pitched at both primary and secondary schools.
- Noted that there was a decrease in knife crime and an increase in carrying and whether it was more common localities and requested further detail of what work was being done with schools to raise awareness.

Priority four - Fight Rural Crime – 03:50:52 on the recording.

The PCC was pleased to report that Operation Honeybun had been successful and had taken into account 50 incidents. Heritage crime was on the rise, and this was a concern as there was a lot of heritage in Dorset. He also addressed night hawking and organised crime and informed members that more news was to follow going forward. The PCC was pleased to report that rural mounted volunteers had continued to be recruited.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members (03:54:57 on the recording).

- Operation Honeybun was currently only targeted at rural areas, was there scope for expansion to more urban areas.
- Disappointed to see the level of wildlife crime

Priority five - Put Victim and Communities First – 03:57:05 on the recording.

The Police and Crime Commissioner highlighted the work being undertaken as part of priority five of the plan, providing detail to restorative justice which had been useful for victims and perpetrators, highlighting that it was victim driven and used catered support for them. The PCC informed members that funding had been approved for vital programmes for children, diverting them from antisocial behaviour. Members were informed of the nationwide charity, Hourglass, which was aimed at supporting older people from abuse and neglect. Continued efforts with community networks were taking place to improve support for victims in Dorset.

Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The PCC responded in detail to questions in relation to the figures of hate crime which were significant.

Priority six - Make Every Penny Count – 04:02:40 on the recording

The Police and Crime Commissioner highlighted that 'right care, right person' had continued to develop and was on track. Members were informed of collaboration with Southwest police and the PCC highlighted the importance of collaboration and building relationships.

Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The PCC responded in detail to questions in relation to the number of forces who members of the Southwest collaboration and the funding framework were.

42. Complaints Update

The Service Manager for Assurance advised that there were no live complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner.

43. Forward Workplan

Cllr Keddle noted that priority leads were originally scheduled to be allocated after the meeting, however, due to a low turn out and the success of the pre-meeting which was held a week prior to the meeting, it was agreed that priority leads and the forward workplan development would be discussed and allocated at a team meeting, scheduled within the next four weeks. Cllr Keddle noted the importance of this for the OPCC to be aware and to ensure that they deliver lines of enquiry.

44. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

45. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Appendix 1
Appendix 2
Appendix 3

Duration of meeting: 10.05 am - 2.19 pm

Chairman

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