

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 24 JULY 2025

Present: Cllrs Alasdair Keddie (Chair), Dr Elizabeth Mytton, Louise Bown, Simon Gibson, Louie O'Leary, Karen Rampton, Peter Sidaway, Tony Trent and Carl Woode

Present remotely: Cllrs Sarah Williams

Apologies: Cllrs B Sargeaunt and David Flagg

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

Simon Bullock (Chief Executive, OPCC), Marc Eyre (Service Manager for Assurance), Adam Harrold (OPCC Director of Operations), Antony Nash (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Megan Rochester (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Julie Strange (OPCC Chief Finance Officer), David Sidwick (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice).

46. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 5th February 2025 were confirmed and signed.

47. Declarations of Interest

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

48. Public Participation

Questions had been received from Mr Joe Salmon and Ms Susan Stockwell.

In response to Mr Salmon, it was confirmed that the caravans were no longer present. The legislation surrounding this matter was noted as complex, although a robust policy was in place. It was explained that a misunderstanding of the policy by an officer new in post had resulted in a delay in action; the policy had since been re-communicated, and more regular reporting was now taking place. A further briefing for all relevant officers was scheduled for the start of the next year. The issue had been raised by a resident and confirmed with the local authority, after which a formal letter had been sent to the Chief Constable. The caravans were subsequently removed, and the press approached the force shortly afterwards. It was noted that, had the force been notified earlier, action would have been taken sooner, and the Chief Constable's assurance on the matter would be

relayed. The Panel also noted the difference in transit sites between Dorset and BCP.

In response to Ms Stockwell, it was confirmed that the licensing of venues was a matter for the local authority and not for the Police and Crime Panel. No further questions or petitions had been received.

49. Election for Chair/Vice Chair - 00:30:05 on the recording

The Panel formally thanked Dr Elizabeth Mytton for her contribution and service to the Panel as she stepped down from her role. Members acknowledged that Dr Mytton had been an asset to the Panel and extended their best wishes for her future endeavours.

It was proposed by Councillor Louise Bown and seconded by Councillor Louie O'Leary that Councillor Alasdair Keddie be appointed Chair of the Police and Crime Panel.

It was proposed by Councillor Trent and seconded by Councillor Louie O'Leary that Councillor Louise Bown be appointed Vice-Chair of the Police and Crime Panel.

Decision: that Cllr Alasdair Keddie and Cllr Louise Bown was appointed as chair and Vice Chair of the Police and Crime Panel.

50. Q4 Monitoring Report - 00:35:42 on the recording

The Panel received an update from the Police and Crime Commissioner on the HIMCFRS PEEL Report, which highlighted three key areas of improvement and reflected overall progress. It was acknowledged that Dorset Police understood the challenges they faced and had a clear vision for addressing them, with several elements considered good practice. A particularly high percentage of 999 calls were answered within ten seconds, consistently exceeding targets.

In relation to responding to the public, improvements to 999 answering times were noted, while the non-emergency response remained an area requiring further development. The Force was taking steps to optimise this service. In the area of investigating crime, there was a clear focus on victim outcomes, supported by the national investigative framework and continuous professional development for officers. Improvements had been made to digital capabilities, including enhanced mobile systems, and work was being aligned with strategic priorities and targeted governance. Victim engagement remained central to this work, and projections indicated that a fully trained and advanced cohort of officers was expected by March 2028.

Regarding stop and search, the Panel was informed that use of the power was now more effectively targeted, but that Dorset Police still needed to improve to no longer be an outlier at the national level. Disparities in stop and search continued to be reviewed on a quarterly basis, with strong scrutiny arrangements in place, including the Force's own scrutiny panel. The use of body-worn video was identified as an important tool in promoting organisational learning.

Questions from Panel Members – 00:52:08 on the recording

- Commented that the update was a positive sign.
- Queried whether the proposed Contact Management system improvements involved adding new systems or replacing existing ones, noting that the control room currently managed multiple systems, and asked whether the systems would run concurrently.
- requested whether a document outlining the structured system could be published to provide clarity on the plan and its impact and asked if there was a timeline for implementation.
- Asked whether, prior to going out to market, Dorset Police had reviewed systems used by other police forces nationally.
- Raised a query regarding video submissions and aspects of digital evidence management, noted for the forward plan, and requested figures on the current number of detectives compared to the projected number in March 2028.

Priority one - Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour - 01:08:15 on the recording

The Panel was informed that total crime and antisocial behaviour continued to decline, with antisocial behaviour reducing by 12% over the past year. The Op Relentless Community Fund was highlighted as a success in supporting local initiatives, including funding for the DocBike motorcyclist safety project. Burglary rates remained stable, with preventative measures introduced through home safety leaflets distributed via estate agents. Figures for serious road injuries were also falling, though it was noted that stigma around drug driving had not yet matched that of drink driving. An improved online theft information pack and a quarterly fraud and cybercrime newsletter had been introduced to raise awareness, acknowledging that while such crimes were not often raised at public meetings, they remained prevalent in Dorset.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members – 01:15:48 on the recording.

- A question was raised on the home security leaflet pilot, asking how success had been determined
- It was queried why business and retail crime remained rated as amber, acknowledging good work undertaken but seeking clarification on the difficulties in addressing these crimes.
- A point was raised regarding public opinion.
- An update was requested on the use of AI technology and the integration of different software systems.
- A question was asked about collaboration with the Highways Authority and whether a review of reporting systems would be undertaken to improve processes.
- Clarification was sought on what encouragement was being provided to members of the public to use the reporting system.

Priority two - Make Policing More Visible and Connected – 01:42:13 on the recording

The Panel welcomed the partnership work contributing to a safe summer. It was reported that in March the police force had hosted two events. Dorset was noted as a popular day-visit destination. While satisfaction levels had declined, they remained generally stable over time. A precept survey indicated that 76% of respondents supported additional funding for policing, with 55% willing to pay the minimum increase or more. However, there was a prevailing view that policing costs should be borne by the government rather than the people of Dorset. Attendance at the Neighbourhood Engagement Board was confirmed, ensuring that engagement and connectivity were effective. The Board was reported to be operating successfully and had scrutinised force plans. It was emphasised that the Force aimed to bring the police closer to the community, with over 600 community contact groups established.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members – 01:50:15 on the recording.

- A question was raised regarding how response time figures were obtained.
- It was asked whether the 101 service was manned during the early hours of the morning.
- Clarification was sought on prioritisation levels for calls.
- An inquiry was made about response times to 101 online requests and the typical waiting period before a response is received.
- Clarification was requested concerning the term "online home" as referenced during the discussion.
- Questions were posed about the purpose of Neighbourhood Engagement Boards, including membership, meeting frequency, and whether findings were published publicly.

Priority three - Fight Violent Crime and High Harm – 02:33:35 on the recording

The Panel was informed that serious violence had decreased. Victim support and domestic abuse were discussed, with domestic abuse highlighted as a significant issue. Bystander awareness training was noted as part of ongoing efforts. Attention was drawn to addiction and substance use, with consideration given to both local and national approaches to addressing these challenges. The Dorset Criminal Justice Board was reviewed, alongside discussion of the reclassification of ketamine. Although knife crime remained among the lowest in the country, concern was expressed over the number of children carrying knives.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members – 02:41:42 on the recording.

- A good assessment was made in relation to prevention.
- A query was raised regarding any findings related to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) week.

- Progress on the Violence Against Women and Girls workshop was requested

Priority four – Fight Rural Crime 02:49:01 on the recording.

The Panel was pleased to report that total crime and incident numbers had decreased, with resources increasing accordingly. The Dorset Partnership Against Rural Crime was discussed, alongside organised crime initiatives. Support had been given to a mobile operation targeting vehicles to address metal theft and waste-related offences. Heritage crime prevention was promoted through the release of short films aimed at raising awareness. A fly-tipping initiative had resulted in fines increasing by over 70%. Funding had also been provided for a rural crime pack focused on livery and stable theft.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members 02:55:52 on the recording.

- Had Dorset seen an increase in heritage crime

In accordance with Procedural Rule 8.1 the committee voted to extend the duration of the meeting

Priority five - Put Victim and Communities First – 03:05:43 on the recording

The Panel was informed that victim satisfaction had increased, with a commitment to ensuring victims of crime had the best possible access to support. Hate crime levels remained stable. Victim support services in Dorset had been commissioned for an additional five years. Engagement with a working group was ongoing. Concern was expressed regarding the number of young people carrying knives, and pilot work had been undertaken to engage with young people to better understand their views on policing.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members – 03:09:18 on the recording.

- Hate crime data had been split to provide more granulated differentiation.
- A survey was commissioned to examine variations in hate crime across the county.
- Analysis was being conducted to compare urban and rural experiences of hate crime.
- A question was raised regarding the commissioner's potential influence in addressing the propagation of hate crime and challenges posed by online influencers and media.
- Engagement with young people was ongoing.
- It was noted with approval that work was being undertaken with the Witness Profiler and People First Forum, with queries about whether these groups supported individuals with learning disabilities or dual diagnoses

Priority six - Make Every Penny Count – 03:37:17 on the recording

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members – 03:37:39 on the recording.

- A question was raised regarding what actions the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) was taking to ensure Dorset received a fair share of funding from central government.
- The efforts of the PCC and officers were commended

The Panel's ongoing support was warmly welcomed and greatly appreciated by the Police and Crime Commissioner. Gratitude was expressed for the opportunity to undertake this important work, with recognition given to the efforts made in engaging with the press and being vocal to central government. Continued support from local MPs was actively sought. The PCC highlighted recent successes in Dorset while also noting the significant cuts that Dorset Police had endured. Dorset was one of the lowest-funded forces in the country, and the PCC discussed the impacts of this. The current police funding formula was highlighted, with concerns raised about its inadequacy and the resulting financial burden placed unfairly on the people of Dorset. It was noted that a response from MPs and the Home Secretary was still pending. Early summer demand pressures were also discussed, confirming that the force was currently in the process of costing this demand. Once the data is available, it will be used to bring MPs together again to address the issue. This presents an opportunity to frame the challenge as both a practical and strategic concern. A strong emphasis was placed on the need to make a tangible difference for the people of Dorset.

51. PCC Annual Report - 03:50:37 on the recording

- Commended the quality of the report and acknowledged the significant work undertaken in its preparation.

NOTED.

52. Community Safety - 03:52:24 on the recording

Cllr A Keddle commended the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for producing an in-depth and well-referenced report. He raised concerns about the lack of clarity between recorded data and the lived experiences of women and girls, noting that the paper highlighted these challenges. He also queried whether there would be a new round of Safer Streets funding.

The Police and Crime Commissioner advised that, to his knowledge, the Home Office had not committed to the continuation of the Safer Streets initiative. At that point in time, it was not known whether the scheme would be replaced, and this was described as a significant concern. He confirmed that he would continue to press central government for additional funding.

Cllr A Keddie further observed that local authorities were also under significant financial pressure. The Panel expressed its support for the reinstatement of the Safer Streets initiative and disappointment that the scheme had not continued, agreeing to support calls for its return.

The Commissioner confirmed that work continued with partners to bring together different groups. He highlighted a recent conference for professionals where a wide range of topics had been discussed, with representation from various organisations. It was noted that a scrutiny panel was also in place to review public consultation. The Commissioner acknowledged the financial challenges faced by partners and emphasised the importance of maintaining pressure on government to prioritise public safety, stating that efforts were ongoing to ensure the safety of women and young girls

53. Staff Health and Wellbeing - 04:01:14 on the recording

It was noted that efforts were being made to remove barriers for the public when engaging with police services. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) emphasised the importance of going out into communities and spending time with the force. He highlighted the use of surveys and direct engagement with residents to gauge public sentiment, while also questioning whether the timing of surveys during periods of high summer demand provided a representative picture. He acknowledged that there were insufficient officers in the force and confirmed that performance was measured both through formal surveys and direct questioning.

The Panel welcomed the community engagement work but queried the visibility of the Chief Constable and how she was held accountable. The PCC confirmed that multiple scrutiny boards reviewed matters such as health and wellbeing and that he met with the Chief Constable on a weekly basis. He explained that leadership had been a key focus of discussions and that the Chief Constable was recognised for leading visibly from the front. He also highlighted ongoing work around officer wellbeing and trauma support, including occupational health provision, and stressed the need for NHS support for officers struggling with injuries or mental health issues, noting that these services were themselves underfunded.

The Panel noted that 211 officers in Dorset had been signed off due to stress and trauma and raised concerns about the disproportional impact of the working environment. It was suggested that these issues could not be fast-tracked through NHS services and that exposure to traumatic incidents was causing significant harm. The PCC referenced the TRIM trauma assessment process detailed in the report, noting improvements in identifying and supporting affected officers. He reiterated the importance of ensuring officers felt valued and acknowledged that significant savings had been required within Dorset Police, which continued to place pressure on wellbeing initiatives.

Concerns were raised about the national context, noting that Dorset's situation was only fractionally worse than the national average but that the average itself remained high. Questions were posed about the measures being taken at a national level to address these issues and the potential impact on recruitment and retention, including the risk of officers seeking employment elsewhere.

The PCC reflected that many forces across the country faced similar challenges and that negative media coverage frequently undermined policing efforts. He highlighted Operation Scorpion as an example of strong local support and emphasised that, despite being underfunded, Dorset Police continued to attract interest and commitment from staff. He stressed the importance of valuing officers who went above and beyond and called for greater appreciation from the press and central government.

NOTED.

54. Complaints Update - 04:21:23 on the recording

The Panel was informed of two complaints. The first complaint had been investigated, was not upheld, and no further action was required. A second complaint had only recently been received and had been passed to the Monitoring Officer for consideration.

It was noted that the composition of the Complaints Sub-Committee Panel would be determined outside of the formal meeting.

55. Forward Workplan - 04:22:16 on the recording

The next steps were identified, and it was agreed that these would be deliberated outside of the formal meeting.

56. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

57. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Appendix 1

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 2.17 pm

Chairman

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