

Police and Crime Panel PCC Responses

24 July 2025

Item 2 – Minutes and Actions

[N/A]

Item 5 – Public Participation

Question Two – Susan Stockwell

PCC Response: Chair, I will deal with this one swiftly if I may as we have answered this question at a previous Panel meeting and my Office has responded to various similar emails from Ms Stockwell over the past year. However, for the benefit of members of the public, the licensing of venues commonly referred to as strip clubs – but more correctly sexual entertainment venues – is a matter for local authorities, not PCCs.

The question in the long statement made is ‘*shouldn’t Dorset Police be objecting to annual licensing applications to clubs in Weymouth and Bournemouth?*’ That, as I have said previously, is an operational matter and therefore one for the Force.

Item 6 – Quarterly Monitoring Report (Q4)

Strategic Issues

Question: How is the PCC responding to the findings of the Peel report, and in particular the three areas where Dorset Police were found to require improvement: Responding to the public; Investigating Crime; and Police powers and treating the public fairly and respectfully

PCC Response: It is important to make clear that since the time of the inspection and this report being published, improvements have continued in many areas rendering some of the data from the inspection period obsolete.

It was pleasing to note that the PEEL report reflects the progress being made in areas including the Force’s Safeguarding Hubs; how the Force manages the most frequent crime types; tackling ASB; the Enhanced Video Response facility; and the strategic and financial planning conducted by Dorset Police.

The report notes the sustained improvements in call handling and response times, in investigations, and in addressing disproportionality in the use of police powers. It also recognises the clear vision of the Force which complements my Police and Crime Plan, which in turn reflects the priorities based on the feedback from the people of Dorset.

Some of the report’s findings mirror areas where I too have challenged the Force to improve, for example on call times. I am pleased that contact officers are now answering more than 94 per cent of 999 calls within 10 seconds, on top of a 20 per cent increase in online crime reports, with 101 calls being answered in just over a minute at triage. I know the Force remains rightly focused on further improving this vital service to the public and I will continue to scrutinise this work closely.

In terms of the three areas highlighted by HMICFRS, I'll just give a quick overview of each:

Responding to the public

Dorset Police Contact Management has shown significant improvements in the last 12 months, with 999 answering time now consistently above 90%. The Force received an area for improvement (AFI) action from HMICFRS regarding the answering times based on 12 months of data up to June 2024, and is anticipating that the current sustained performance will be accepted by HMICFRS and enable that AFI to be signed off in due course.

Non-emergency answering times remain a challenge as the Force will always prioritise emergency demand, however callers to 101 receive an average answering time of 60 seconds where 75% of calls are resolved at first point of contact. Challenges remain in the secondary call handling arena.

The Force consistently achieves over 80% for grade 1 emergency response within 20 minutes. Dorset Police is seeking to improve non-emergency response and has established enhanced video response to service more routine demand, averaging attendance at 75% within the 48 hours' time target, and are now leading a national roll out of this approach.

With that said, Chair, I will be clear that non-emergency call handling remains an area of improvement for the Force.

I am comfortable that Dorset Police is taking steps towards optimising its people and its processes. The Force has identified, for example, that replacing the ageing and patchwork control room systems with a single integrated software suite would bring significant dividends to more efficient delivery, and I am grateful for the work being done by both my and the Force's leadership teams to identify a solution which can be delivered within our limited systems replacement budget. I hope to report back at the next Panel that a decision on this has been made.

Investigating crime

Dorset Police is delivering an uplift in investigative standards through a clear focus on victim outcomes, capability growth, and innovation. The Force has embedded national frameworks such as the National Operating Model for Sexual Offences, strengthened investigative consistency through improved use of investigative toolkits, and prioritised continuous professional development in areas including digital evidence, trauma-informed practice, and vulnerability.

Key digital enablers, such as improved digital evidence management and mobile systems, are also driving efficiency and improving the management of evidence and safeguarding. Strategic priorities, including dwelling burglary, rape and serious sexual offences, and domestic abuse, are supported by targeted governance and operational arrangements, and innovative approaches such as Enhanced Video Response to enhance victim engagement and investigative outcomes are also helping delivery.

The number of specialist investigative staff remains a national challenge for policing, and Dorset has a dedicated board to address recruitment, retention and wellbeing of investigators,

which is informed by recommendations made at a national level. Currently, 95% of the Force's detective constable posts are occupied either by a fully qualified detective or an officer on the investigator development programme and in training. Based on projections, it is anticipated that the Force will reach a fully qualified cohort at its design level by March 2028.

The key measure that the HMICFRS look at is positive outcomes – we are currently at 13.9%. Their target is 15%.

Police powers and treating the public fairly and respectfully

I have issued a formal PCC challenge to the Force on the area of stop and search ethnic disproportionality and continue to monitor progress. When I came into office this figure stood at 20:1 – it now stands at 9:1. The progress in Dorset has kept pace with the national reduction – 7:1 in 2020/21, and 3.7:1 in 2023/24. However, that pace must improve for Dorset Police to move from its position at the national outlier, and to continue to ensure that stop and search is utilised in a fair and proportionate manner.

The Force's aim regarding stop and search, has been clearly set out in its Race Action Plan. The aims of said Plan are to improve Black people's experience of policing, eliminate racial disparities and to become an anti-racist and inclusive organisation.

Stop and search disparity is an element within that, but if it needs to happen it must be used. It is key area of focus and is overseen at Executive level through various boards, all of which are attended by members of my Senior Management Team. This topic is also reviewed at my Use of Police Powers and Standards Scrutiny Panel on a quarterly basis.

The Force has changed the way it delivers stop and search to focus on an intelligent-led priorities based system as well as enhancing training for officers in reducing unexplained disproportionality by building strong and objective grounds for search and considering the potential impact of bias.

Good community scrutiny processes are in place that review stop and search encounters, including officer Body Worn Video where feedback is given to individuals as well as identifying organisational learning. This has been highlighted by HMICFRS as good practice.

Priority One - Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour - Cllrs Woode / Trent

Question: The Commissioner previously identified that AI technology may be used to maximise Op Snap performance. Is there any update on this?

PCC Response: Operation Snap is a police platform that allow members of the public to submit dashcam or helmet-cam footage of suspected driving infractions such as close passes, mobile phone use and other dangerous driving.

Whilst it is certainly possible that an AI model could be developed and trained to detect these infractions, for human review and decision – this technology does not yet exist.

At the moment, however, ten Forces are testing the use of AI-powered cameras which scan for mobile phone and seat belt violations, and flag incidents for human review and decision – as part of a National Highways trial. This is an area of emerging technology that my office and I are keeping a very close eye on.

Question: Collision statistics

PCC Response: Thank you for the question – I wholeheartedly agree that better collection and sharing of road traffic collision data can only help to drive down the number of deaths and serious injuries on our roads and the new data sharing initiative is a major step in the right direction.

Members will know that I attend the Dorset Road Safety Partnership meeting and my office also has a lead for this important area of business. I know that this issue is already being considered and the Force road safety team plan to lead on further conversations with the Partnership to assess the current public reporting arrangements and what options might be available.

While I am optimistic that improvements can be made – certainly with regards to communication about the existing processes – I must urge some caution. As Cllr Gibson has highlighted, the Force is part of the Single Online Home system and it may be a challenge to use that system for these purposes.

Priority Two - Make Policing More Visible and Connected - Cllrs Bown / Gibson

Question: How is the 19.5 mins response time arrived at for 101? This does not match with personal experience.

PCC Response: Of those circa 140,000 calls, 25% related to requesting updates from or passing updates on to a named officer, 20% were for other agencies, and 13% were directed to online policing services, amongst others.

74% of calls were dealt with at the first point of contact – and the average handling time for these calls is less than three minutes.

The delay occurs with the remaining 26% of calls which were transferred to what is called secondary call handling. Here, the average answer time across the year was 18 mins and the average speaking time was 12.5 mins – meaning that the overall call time was in excess of 30 mins.

There are few reasons why calls are transferred to secondary handling – including the caller themselves preferring to wait on the line for a call handler rather than using an online service – but the criteria is based on two things – the level of Threat, Harm, Risk and Vulnerability, and the incident type.

For example, a report of a theft of a mobile phone might be signposted to be completed online, however, if following intrusive questioning the victim advises their partner stole the phone, then triage would place the call through to secondary call handling. The triage operators have a full guide and are trained to undertake this process, which can take up to four minutes, as highlighted above.

It is well understood that we have had spikes of demand associated with good weather and school holidays. During these peak periods, it is not just the non-emergency call demand that increases, but also the emergency 999 line. The Chief Constable will always prioritise, and I will always support the prioritisation, of 999 calls during times of increased demand.

This prioritisation is followed by – in order: non-emergency call triage, then single online home (given the channel shift that has occurred in recent years*), and finally secondary call handling. The reality is that challenging decisions are needed.

Other relevant factors include:

- Resourcing – Over the last year, the vacancy rate within contact management has increased. The Force has taken steps to improve retention rates, but I am told that many of the leavers have joined as police officers or taken on other roles within Dorset Police.
- Training requirements – it can take up to 12 months to train someone to be proficient in role. With the turnover of staff and the delays in recruitment, contact reports that they have been operating without the multi skilled workforce. This prevents the department's ability to surge.
- Training moratorium – given we know that demand will peak during the summer months, typically the Force places a temporary halt on training and other abstractions during this time to best meet this demand. However, this will obviously increase abstractions across the remainder of the year.

Question: What is the scope of the Neighbourhood Engagement Boards, their proposed impact and membership?

PCC Response: The Neighbourhood Engagement Board is a Force board, chaired by a local policing Superintendent. Attendees include police leads for neighbourhood policing, Neighbourhood Engagement Officers – PCSOs with a specific focus on engagement activity – Force communications colleagues and volunteer team leads.

The focus of the meetings is to ensure that key engagement commitments – including attendance at public events; community contact point dates and locations; social media updates; and Dorset Alert use, for example – are maintained and that best practice is shared across the Force. Some of the requirements of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee – for example, that NPT pages are kept up-to-date and named officers are publicised – are also tracked via this Board.

The OPCC has a seat at the Board so that the views of the public can be fed into discussions and that performance against the Police and Crime Plan can be tracked.

Priority Three - Fight Violent Crime and High Harm - Cllr Rampton TBC / Dr Mytton

[N/A]

Priority Four - Fight Rural Crime – Cllr Williams TBC / Flagg

[N/A]

Priority Five - Put Victim and Communities First - Cllrs Keddie / Sidaway

Question: There are separate indicators for Hate Incidents and Hate Crimes. Can the commissioner clarify the difference? Can we provide data at a more granular basis, across different protected characteristics (LGBTQ; race; religion)?

PCC Response: The difference between a hate crime and a hate incident lies in whether a criminal offence has taken place. Common examples include physical assault, threats of violence, harassment or stalking, criminal damage such as vandalism or graffiti, and malicious communication whether on or offline.

The key point therefore is that a hate crime is recorded if the threshold for a criminal offence is reached, and the crime is motivated by – or perceived to be motivated by – hate or hostility.

In terms of the granularity of hate crime this is broken down by the following categories – racially motivated and religiously motivated (which are often interchangeable in the minds of many and so are typically combined), and then motivated by an individuals' disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

In terms of the breakdown between those categories, the split is stable over time – and is around 75% religiously or racially motivated, around 14% motivated by an individual's sexual orientation, around 9% disability motivated, and around 3% motivated by gender identity.

Question: The report identifies 92% of people feel safe in Dorset. How has this figure been arrived at, as it doesn't reflect what we hear from constituents, particularly in some more urban areas.

PCC Response: Dorset Police has, for many years, commissioned an external Community Safety Survey (CSS). This survey is carried out on behalf of Dorset Police, by external company Social & Marketing Strategic Research (SMSR).

It is conducted on randomly selected residents of Dorset aged over 16, to find out their views to help inform Dorset Police's plans and priorities for the future. The aim being to contact approximately 1200 people by phone, in 4 waves of 300 up to the end of April each year.

Priority Six - Make Every Penny Count –

Question: At the budget panel at Feb this year the Chief Constable said in the region of an additional £12m would be needed to provide a good service. The current funding via the precept is disproportionate to Dorset residents than in most areas of the country. What action is the PCC taking to ensure that Dorset is getting its fair share of funding, reflecting seasonal and geographic factors? Will the PCC work with the panel to achieve a letter of joint endeavour from the panel, Council leaders, and MPs?

PCC Response: Thank you Chair, the Panel's ongoing support in this area is most welcome

As the public would expect, I continue to be vocal on this subject – using every opportunity that is afforded to me to raise this issue to Ministers both in person, and in writing. I have also continued to seek the support of our MPs.

I wrote to the Home Secretary at the end of April, highlighting the local successes of the hotspot policing initiative and the relentless tackling of ASB, helping move us from 10th to 8th safest place in the country.

However, despite those successes, Dorset has had to, and is planning to, achieve over £15m pounds in savings throughout 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 – including 78 members of police staff leaving through the Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme last year. This means that – despite the promise of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee – in Dorset we will only achieve the movement of 40 police officers moved back to the front line, as many are still undertaking roles previously filled by police staff.

I was very clear with the Home Secretary that this is due to the perverse and archaic National Funding Formula, that has been operating since 2013 and primarily favours large or urban forces. There are excluded factors that affect Dorset and these need to be addressed.

In terms of my action, Chair, my letter called on the Home Secretary to do the right thing. Specifically to:

1. Enact the new funding formula taking into account sparsity and seasonality.
2. Ensure VRUs are in each force area.
3. No longer use NFF to calculate other policing grants.

I recognised then, as I do now, that this will require political courage as large forces will not want such a change. I also made suggestions for how this could be ameliorated in a couple of ways. For example by: giving precept flexibility for those affected – currently Dorset residents pay 51% of their police force whereas the average is 34%, and some of those best-favoured pay 20%. That would be an elegant and fair solution.

To date Chair, I have yet to receive a reply.

Item 7 – Annual Report

[N/A]

Item 8 – VAWG

[N/A]

Item 9 – Health and Wellbeing

[N/A]