

Cheshire Police and Crime Panel

Agenda

Date:	Friday 7th February 2025
Time:	10.00 am
Venue:	1st Floor Committee Room, Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BG

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and in the report.

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. Apologies

Members are reminded that, in accordance with governance procedure rule at Part 3 paragraph 2.6, Panel Members, or their constituent authority, may nominate substitute members of the Panel in the event that the appointed representative(s) is/are unable to attend the meeting. Advance notice of substitution should be given to the host authority wherever possible. Members are encouraged wherever possible to secure the attendance of a substitute if they are unable to be present.

2. Code of Conduct - Declaration of Interests. Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda no later than when the item is reached.

3. Public Participation

To receive questions from members of the public. A total period of 15 minutes will be allocated for members of the public to speak at Panel meetings. Each member of the public shall be limited to a period of up to 5 minutes speaking. At the Chair's discretion the period made available for questions and statements may be extended.

Contact:	Martin Smith, Registration and Civic Services Manager
Tel:	01270 686012
E-Mail:	martin.r.smith@cheshireeast.gov.uk

In order that an appropriate answer to the questions can be given, the deadline for indicating a wish to speak or for submission of questions is 3 clear working days before a meeting of the Panel. The Chair has the discretion to waive the 3-day rule for issues deemed to be urgent.

In response to questions or statements the Panel may choose to agree to either provide an agreed verbal response, that will be minuted or to provide a written reply to a questioners chosen address.

Those wishing to ask a question or make a statement should register by email to: martin.r.smith@cheshireeast.gov.uk or send the question or statement by post to:

Cheshire Police and Crime Panel
Democratic Services and Governance
c/o Municipal Buildings
Earle Street
Crewe
CW1 2BJ

A list of those speaking or asking questions at a meeting of the Panel will be drawn up by the Panel's Secretariat in order of receipt. Copies of questions and statements will be circulated to all Panel members in advance of the meeting and will be made available to the public attending the meeting. Copies will also be available on the Police and Crime Panel's page of the Cheshire East Council website.

Nobody may submit more than one question or make more than one statement at the same meeting, but a supplementary question, related to the subject raised in the question /statement, will be permitted for clarification at the discretion of the Chair.

Those speaking or asking questions will not be permitted to address any issue that is the subject of a current or proposed complaint by them against the Police and Crime Commissioner. They are also advised that reference to an issue that could become the subject of a future complaint by them could prejudice the Panel's consideration of that complaint.

The Panel will not accept a question or statement if:

There is insufficient detail to enable a proper response to be provided.

It is not about a matter for which the Police and Crime Panel has responsibility.

It is potentially defamatory, frivolous or offensive against named individuals.

It is substantially the same question which has been put at a meeting of the Police and Crime Panel in the last six months.

It requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 5 - 10)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2024.

5. **Chair's Announcements**

6. **Membership of the Police and Crime Panel**

To receive a verbal update on the Panel's membership.

7. **Panel's Work Programme** (Pages 11 - 12)

To consider the programme of meetings and work programme.

8. **Questions Submitted in Advance to the Commissioner** (Pages 13 - 14)

10.15 am THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE FOR THE FOLLOWING PART OF THE MEETING

9. **Welcome to the Commissioner and Commissioner's Introduction**

10. **Police and Crime Commissioner's Proposed Precept: 2025/26**
(Pages 15 - 74)

To review the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed Precept for 2025/26.

11. **Police and Crime Commissioner's Draft Police and Crime Plan**
(Pages 75 - 146)

To consider the draft Police and Crime Plan.

12. **Overview and Scrutiny of the Police and Crime Commissioner**

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire Police and Crime Panel**
held on Friday 22nd November 2024 at Ellesmere Port Library

PRESENT

Councillors:

Cheshire East: Councillor Judy Snowball

Cheshire West & Chester: Councillors Mike Jones, Keith Millar and Sam Naylor

Halton: Councillors Martha Lloyd Jones and Norman Plumpton
Walsh

Warrington: Councillors Kuldeep Dhillon and Bob Hignett

Officers: Mr Martin Smith, Cheshire East Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Steve Edgar, Cllr Rob Moreton, Mrs Gemma Shepherd Etchells and Miss Yasmin Somani.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATION OF INTERESTS. RELEVANT AUTHORITIES (DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS) REGULATIONS 2012

No issues were raised.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public wished to speak at the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2024 be approved.

Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh sought clarification from the Secretariat as to the level of detail required in Panel Minutes, referencing observations made by the host authority's Monitoring Officer at the previous meeting that had not been recorded in the minutes. The Secretariat clarified that a full audio recording of the meeting was available on the Cheshire East Council website and that formal minutes were not intended to be a verbatim record of a meeting.

5. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Judy Snowball noted that on behalf of the Panel she would be writing to Mr Evan Morris MBE, the Panel's former Chair to thank him for his exemplary service. She noted that the vacancy for the Panel's vacant co-opted member would be advertised shortly. Councillor Snowball thanked the Commissioner for hosting an informal meeting with Panel members and for the programme of future informal meetings that he had drawn up.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel's work programme for the remainder of the municipal year was noted, this included three informal meetings with the Commissioner. Panel members were asked to let the Secretariat have details of issues that they would like discussed at future meetings.

7. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED IN ADVANCE TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Chair noted that two questions had been submitted in advance to the Commissioner and that these had been published with the Panel's papers.

8. WELCOME TO THE COMMISSIONER

The Chair welcomed the Commissioner and his team to the meeting.

9. COMMISSIONER'S INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

The Commissioner updated the Panel on a range of issues. He noted that he and his Deputy Commissioners had attended Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day events. The Commissioner indicated that he had been privileged to attend the Constabulary's ACE Awards which celebrated outstanding work across the Constabulary.

10. COMMISSIONER'S DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Commissioner introduced his annual report taking questions from Panel members.

RESOLVED

That the Panel note the Commissioner's Annual Report, with no formal recommendations being made.

A copy of the letter sent to the Commissioner by the Panel's Chair in relation to the Annual Report is attached to these minutes.

11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

In addition to the two pre-submitted questions, Panel members asked the Commissioner a range of further questions. Details of all questions asked of the Commissioner and his responses can be found on the Police and Crime Panel page of the Cheshire East Council website.

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Mr Dan Price
By email

Cheshire Police and Crime Panel
c/o Cheshire East Council
Delamere House
Delamere Street
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 2JZ

Date: 22nd November 2024

judy.snowball@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Dear Commissioner,

ANNUAL REPORT

Thank you for attending this morning's meeting of the Cheshire Police and Crime Panel and for presenting your draft annual report.

I can confirm that the Panel made no formal recommendations in relation to the annual report.

Yours sincerely.

Judy Snowball

Cllr Judy Snowball
Chair, Cheshire Police and Crime Panel

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Cheshire Police and Crime Panel**Work Programme 2024/25****Formal meetings of the Panel:**

- Friday 21st February 2025 10.00am (reserve date, should the Panel need a second meeting to consider the Commissioner's precept).
- Friday 11th April 2025 10.00am

Informal meetings with the Commissioner

- Friday 21 March 2025 10.00am

Issues raised by Panel members for consideration at future meetings:

- Update on "Right Care, Right Person"
- Operation of Police Custody suites, including policy on intimate searching
- Police training
- Violence against women and girls
- Restorative justice
- Progress with implementation of recommendations from Angiolini Inquiry
- Use of technology, including rollout of AI

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Questions to the Commissioner**February 2025**

1. We have heard you speak of your innovative Citizens Assemblies which are now taking place in various areas across Cheshire. I understand that after putting out a Contracts Awards Notice you have now commissioned the companies Think insight and Strategy, an independent research agency, who will work alongside another company, Plus Four Market Research, to deliver these Citizens Assemblies across Cheshire. What is the budget / expected expenditure to deliver each of these assemblies and how many do you expect to hold?
2. 681 hate crimes were recorded during Q2 (July-September 2024), a 20.3% increase compared with Q1, equating to 115 more offences. This was the third quarterly increase in a row. How are you scrutinising what response Cheshire Police are taking to address this increase? There has been national debate over the scrapping of responding to non-crime hate incidents. Do you support this so that there can be more focus on taking action on hate crime or do you see these investigations as beneficial in tackling hate crime more generally?
3. Can the commissioner tell the Panel what the percentage of ethnic background officers in the cheshire constabulary is? If this is not a parallel figure to the percentage of the Cheshire community what steps are you taking to recruit and make this a fair representation?

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Cheshire Police and Crime Panel

Date of Meeting: 07 February 2025

Report of: Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services, Cheshire East Council

Subject: Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed Precept for 2025/26

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the process that the Panel must follow for reviewing the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed precept for 2025/26.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Panel reviews the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed precept for 2025/26 in accordance with the Police and Crime Panels (Precept and Chief Constable Appointment) Regulations 2012, and reports on its decision to the Commissioner.

3. Precept 2025/26

- 3.1 The arrangements for determining the Police precept are set out in Section 26 and Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and Part 2 of the Police and Crime Panels (Precepts and Chief Constable Appointments) Regulations 2012.

- 3.2 Having considered the precept, the Panel must either:

- Support the precept without qualification or comment;
- Support the precept and make recommendations to the Police and Crime Commissioner; or
- Veto the proposed precept (by the required majority of at least two thirds of the persons who are members of the Panel at the time the decision is made).

- 3.3 If the Panel vetoes the proposed precept, the report that is made to the Commissioner must include a clear statement that the Panel has vetoed the proposed precept, with the Panel's reasons. In such circumstances the Regulations require that the Panel will receive a response from the Commissioner. If a veto is applied a further meeting of the Panel would be required; a reserve date has been set for 21st February 2025, should such a meeting be required.
- 3.4 A Police precept is issued annually by the Commissioner under Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The precept forms part of the Council Tax bills issued by the four constituent authorities within the Police Force area. The Commissioner may not issue a precept for a financial year until the end of the scrutiny process by the Police and Crime Panel is reached.
- 3.5 The Commissioner's Council Tax precept report was approved by his Joint Management Board on Wednesday 29th January 2025. His letter to the Panel's Chair outlining his proposals (dated 29th January) is attached as Appendix II.
- 3.6 The Commissioner will meet informally with the Panel on 31st January 2025 to explain the consultation exercise that has been undertaken over recent weeks in relation to the precept, along with his proposed precept and other issues related to the Police budget. At that meeting the Commissioner and his finance team will outline the likely financial scenario facing the Constabulary in 2025/26.
- 3.7 A copy of a Home Office guidance note is attached as Appendix I. This comprehensively outlines the process for a Police and Crime Panel's scrutiny of their Commissioner's proposed precept. The guidance note clearly outlines the timescales related to the process and the various deadlines that must be met.

4. Summary and conclusion

- 4.1 The Panel must review and make a report and or recommendations in connection to the Commissioners proposed precept. Should a veto be applied a further meeting of the Panel would need to be convened.

5. Equality Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific equality implications related to this report.

6. Financial Considerations

- 6.1 There are no financial implications for the Panel in considering these matters, except insofar as an additional meeting would need to be arranged if the precept is vetoed. The cost implications of any such arrangement could be contained within the Panel's existing budget.

7. Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:-

Name: Brian Reed

Designation: Head of Democratic Services

Local Authority: Cheshire East Council

Email: brian.reed@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Police and Crime Panels – Scrutiny of Precepts

This guidance note explains the process for the police and crime panel's (PCP) scrutiny of the police and crime commissioner's (PCC) proposed precept and should be read alongside:

- Schedule 5 of the [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#) ("the Act")
- Part 2 of the [Police and Crime Panels \(Precepts and Chief Constable Appointments\) Regulations 2012](#) ("the Regulations")

A separate [guidance note setting out the scrutiny of chief constable appointments](#) has been published alongside this guidance note.

Background

Schedule 5 of the Act sets out the process for issuing a precept, including the panel's role in reviewing the proposed precept, their power to veto the precept and the steps to be taken if they do veto the proposed precept.

The Regulations provide greater detail to the Act, including time limits applicable to the stages of the process and the process for reviewing and issuing a revised precept.

Schedule 5 requires:

- the PCC to notify the panel of his/her proposed precept;
- the panel to review the proposed precept;
- the panel to make a report to the PCC on the proposed precept (this may include recommendations);
- the panel's report (if they veto the proposed precept) to include a statement that they have vetoed it;
- a decision of veto to be agreed by two-thirds of the panel members;
- the PCC to have regard to the report made by the panel (including any recommendations in the report);
- the PCC to give the panel a response to their report (and any such recommendations);
- the PCC to publish the response.

It is for the panel to determine how a response to a report or recommendations is to be published.

If there is no veto and the PCC has published his/her response to the panel's report, the PCC may then issue the proposed precept - or a different precept (but only if in accordance with a recommendation in the panel's report to do so).

The Regulations require:

- the PCC to notify the panel of his/her proposed precept **by 1 February**;
- the panel to review and make a report to the PCC on the proposed precept (whether it vetoes the precept or not) **by 8 February**;
- where the panel vetoes the precept, the PCC to have regard to and respond to the Panel's report, and publish his/her response, including the revised precept, **by 15 February**;

- the panel, on receipt of a response from the PCC notifying them of his/her revised precept, to review the revised precept and make a second report to the PCC **by 22 February**;
- the PCC to have regard to and respond to the Panel's second report and publish his/her response, **by 1 March**.

Panel's report on the proposed precept

If the panel fails to report to the PCC by 8 February the scrutiny process comes to an end, even if the panel have voted to veto the proposed precept, and the PCC may issue the proposed precept.

PCC's response to a veto

Where the panel vetoes the proposed precept, the PCC must have regard to the report made by the panel, give the panel a response to the report and publish the response, by 15 February. In his/her response, the PCC must notify the panel of the revised precept that he intends to issue.

Where the panel's report indicates that they vetoed the precept because it was:

- too **high**, the revised precept must be lower than the previously proposed precept.
- too **low**, the revised precept must be higher than the previously proposed precept.

The PCP may only veto the first proposed precept. Such a veto must be agreed by two-thirds of PCP members (the full membership rather than those present at a meeting). Where a veto occurs, the report to the PCC must include a statement to that effect.

Panel's review of the revised precept

On receipt of a response from the PCC notifying them of the revised precept proposal, the panel must review the revised precept proposal and make a second report to the PCC on the revised precept by 22 February. This report may:

- indicate whether the panel accepts or rejects the revised precept (although rejection does not prevent the PCC from issuing the revised precept); and
- make recommendations, including recommendations on the precept that should be issued.

If the panel fails to make a second report to the PCC by 22 February, the PCC may issue the revised precept.

Issuing the precept

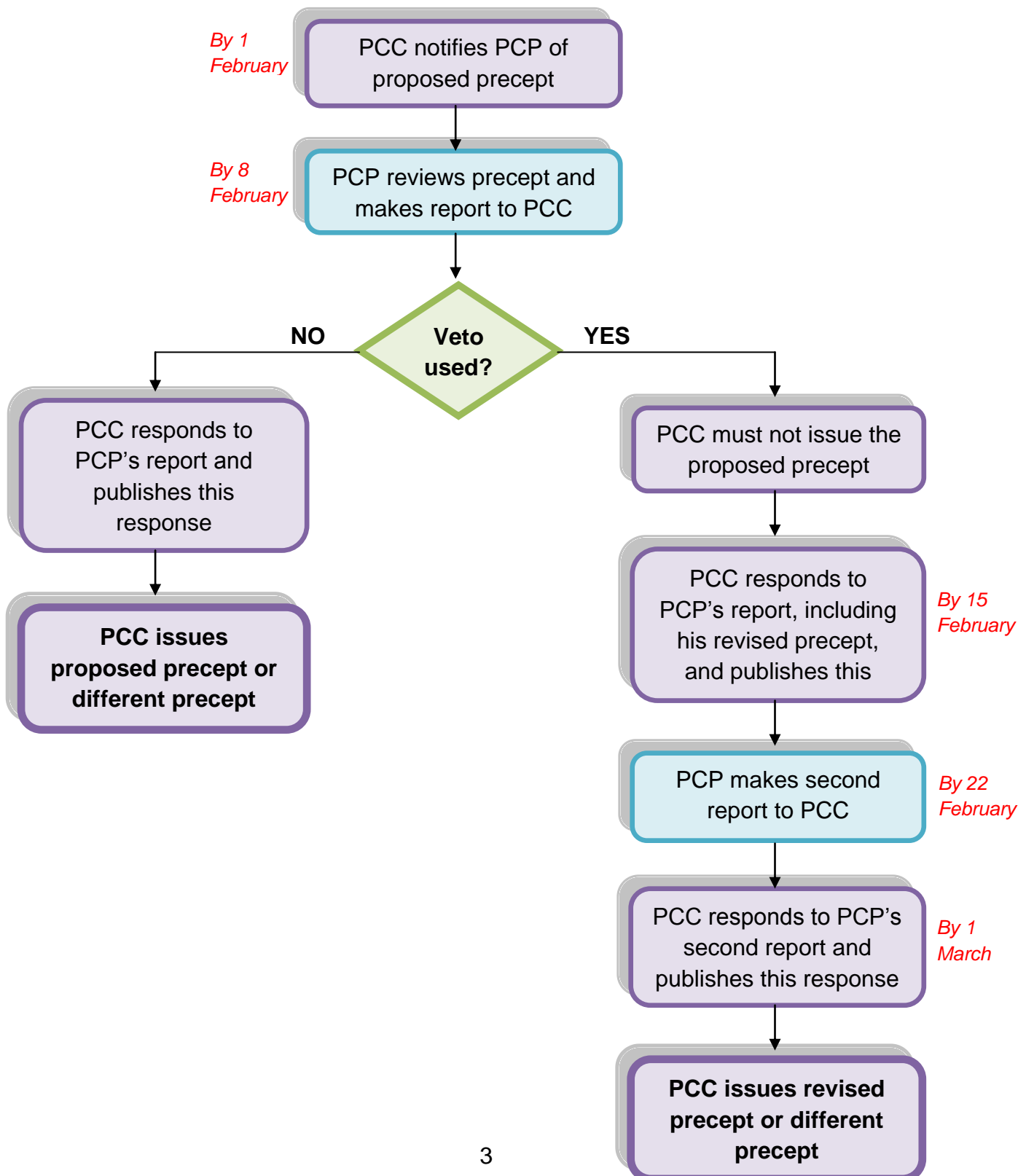
Excluding where the panel fails to report on the proposed precept by 8 February or make a second report on the revised precept by 22 February, the scrutiny process ends when the PCC gives the panel his/her response to their second report.

The PCC may then:

- issue the revised precept; or
- issue a different precept, although:

- they must not issue a precept that is higher than the revised precept if the revised precept was lowered following the panel's initial report on the first proposed precept indicating it was vetoed because it was too high;
- they must not issue a precept which is lower than the revised precept if the revised precept was raised following the panel's initial report on the first proposed precept indicating it was vetoed because it was too low.

Process for PCP scrutiny of PCC's proposed precept



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Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

Cllr Judy Snowball
 Chair, Police & Crime Panel for Cheshire
 c/o Cheshire East Council
 Delamere House
 Delamere Street
 Crewe
 Cheshire
 CW1 2JZ

Dan Price
 Police & Crime Commissioner
 Cheshire Constabulary Headquarters
 Clemonds Hey
 Oakmere Road
 Winsford
 CW7 2UA

Date: Wednesday 29 January 2025

Our Ref:
 PCC/20250129

Your Ref:

Tel:
 01606 364000

Email:
police.crime.commissioner@cheshire.police.uk

Dear Cllr Snowball,

Proposed Precept 2025/26

I enclose details of the proposed precept for 2025/26 for consideration at your meeting on Friday 7 February 2025. This is based upon the provisional settlement issued by the Home Office on 17 December 2024. A full copy of the budget and council tax precept report approved by the Joint Management Board on Wednesday 29 January is also enclosed for information.

The 2025/26 budget takes account of my new Police and Crime Plan, which has a wide range of innovative initiatives within it that will ensure the service is well equipped to deal with current and emerging threats and drive efficiencies and investigative capacity. I have listened to the public from across Cheshire, including through the first ever Police and Crime Commissioner Citizens' Assembly in the UK, and have developed a plan with three key pillars:

- Listen to the Public
- Modernise
- Reduce Crime.

As my Chief Finance Officer, Clare Hodgson, will brief the Panel informally on 31 January 2025, Cheshire Constabulary will receive a potential funding increase of up to 6.1% (approx. £16.2m) for 2025/26. Within this is an assumed increase to the policing element of the council tax precept of £14 per annum for a band D property, which is estimated to give £6.4m (40%) of the increase. This is an increase of around £1.17 per month at Band D. Nearly two thirds of households in Cheshire fall in Council Tax Bands A-C, so will pay less than £14 annual increase as shown below:

Council Tax Band	Current payment (Per Annum)	Increase (Per Annum)	Total payment (Per Annum)
A	£175.29	£9.34	£184.63
B	£204.51	£10.89	£215.40
C	£233.72	£12.45	£246.17
D	£262.94	£14.00	£276.94
E	£321.37	£17.11	£338.48
F	£379.80	£20.22	£400.02
G	£438.23	£23.34	£461.57
H	£525.88	£28.00	£553.88

As mentioned previously, the assumption of a £14 precept increase is included within the funding increase of £16.2m. If I do not increase the precept by £14 per annum at Band D, this would result in a significant loss of funding to Cheshire in 2025/26 and this amount would be lost to the base budget going forward.

The funding received from Central Government includes an increase which fully covers the additional costs to Cheshire Constabulary of National Insurance increases. It also includes £6.9m which must be claimed separately and is dependent upon maintaining police officer numbers and increasing resources within neighbourhood policing in line with the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. Cheshire will maintain officer numbers at 2,395 plus an additional 15, which is the highest in modern times.

Inflation and legal and unavoidable commitments added almost £20m to Cheshire Constabulary's costs and a budget gap exists. A comprehensive Priority Based Budgeting exercise was carried out to ensure resources continue to be allocated to priority areas as set out in my Police and Crime Plan and to meet local policing needs. This exercise also identified £6.3m of savings that could be made to help address the funding gap.

A formal consultation exercise on the police precept was undertaken between 6 January and 20 January 2025. The survey was carried out online, with residents being encouraged to complete the survey via social media. Paper copies were also printed and distributed to people who requested them. A total number of 1,694 responses were received online, with paper copies still being collated and full results expected the first week of February. 67% of respondents agreed to support an increase to the precept of either £14 (31% support) or above (36% support).

Cheshire Constabulary ranks within the top 5 forces nationally for charge/outcome rates in sexual offences (2nd), other sexual offences (3rd) and all crimes (top 5). Support through the police precept in 2024/25 enabled me to allocate funding to maintain improved performance in several key priority areas. The percentage of emergency calls answered within 10 seconds has increased compared to the previous year, as has the percentage of offenders who have been brought to justice.

In the face of future financial uncertainties, current pressures, and the fast-moving pace of complex demands, it is vital that the Chief Constable has the resources necessary to protect the public of Cheshire, achieve my Police and Crime Plan priorities and to deliver on local priorities and commitments at a national level. To achieve this, I am therefore proposing an increase of £14 per annum (based on band D) to go towards achieving my Police and Crime Plan priorities.

In accordance with legislation, I submit this precept proposal for the Panel's consideration on Friday 7 February 2025 and should be grateful for your response by the statutory deadline of 8 February 2025.

Yours sincerely



Dan Price
Police & Crime Commissioner



JOINT MANAGEMENT BOARD

DECISION NO. 2025/04

DATE: 29 JANUARY 2025

BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT 2025/26

Executive Summary:

The Commissioner is required by law, to set an annual budget and issue a precept (the Commissioner's element of council tax), taking into account Government grant funding, operational demands, and the economic inflationary pressures. Full details of the 2025/26 budget are presented in Appendix 1.

Recommendations: that

- (1) the Police & Crime Panel be notified that it is proposed to increase the police element of council tax by 5.3% (£14 p.a. for an average Band D equivalent property for 2025/26; an uplift from £262.94 to £276.94; i.e., by 27p per week);
- (2) the net budget requirement for the financial year commencing 1 April 2025 be set at £262.527m.
- (3) the proposed 2025/26 precepts be as follows:

	Number of Band D equivalent houses	Precept on Collection Fund £
Cheshire East	163,261.10	45,213,529
Cheshire West and Chester	131,666.40	36,463,693
Halton	36,936.00	10,229,056
Warrington	72,262.00	20,012,238
Total	404,125.50	111,918,516

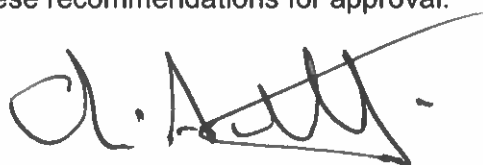
Band	Proposed 2025/26 £	Actual 2024/25 £	Change per year £	Change per week £p
A	184.63	175.29	9.34	0.18
B	215.40	204.51	10.89	0.21
C	246.17	233.72	12.45	0.24
D	276.94	262.94	14.00	0.27
E	338.48	321.37	17.11	0.33
F	400.02	379.80	20.22	0.39
G	461.57	438.23	23.34	0.45
H	553.88	525.88	28.00	0.54

- (4) the deficit of collection funds allocated to the Commissioner of £72k included in the budget and its funding from reserves, be noted;
- (5) the Legal & Unavoidable Commitments of £5.804m and Operational demands and pressures of £1.719m as set out in tables 3 and 4 of the report, be approved;

- (6) the savings proposals totalling £6.288m, as set out in table 5 in the budget report, be approved;
- (7) the financial health targets for monitoring purposes as set out below, be approved:
- (i) *Reserves*
That the level of general reserves, after allowing for potential financial risks be maintained, at no lower than 3% of the net budget and that this be monitored by the Commissioner on a quarterly basis.
 - (ii) *Revenue Spending*
That the Chief Constable maintains revenue spending within 1% of the net budget and that this is monitored by the Commissioner on a quarterly basis.
 - (iii) *Capital Programme Management*
That the Chief Constable maintains the projected capital outturn at a level that does not vary from the original capital programme by more than 20%. The total capital programme includes the new schemes and those schemes brought forward from previous years. This target is to be monitored by the Commissioner on a quarterly basis.
 - (iv) *Debt*
That the Chief Constable collects at least 50% of debtor income within one month of the invoice being raised.
 - (v) *Prudential Indicators*
That the actual prudential indicators be monitored by the Commissioner on an annual basis against the indicators set in the budget.
- (8) the Capital Strategy and Reserves Strategy as set out in appendices 5 and 6 be approved.

I submit these recommendations for approval.

Signature



Date 29 January 2025

Deputy Chief Constable

I have reached the following decision:

Approval of the recommendations.

My rationale for this decision is:

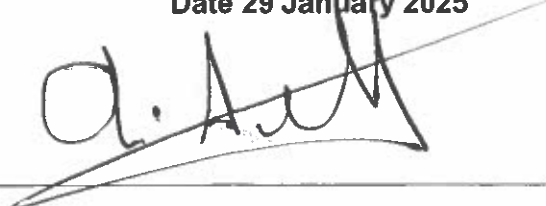
Agreeing the 2025/26 budget will allow the Chief Constable to deliver the priorities contained within my Police and Crime Plan and provide the appropriate level of resources for Cheshire Constabulary for the next financial year.

Signature



Police & Crime Commissioner

Date 29 January 2025



PART 1 – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the Commissioner to finalise the 2025/26 budget and meet their statutory duty to set a precept.
2. The Commissioner receives funding from two main sources – Government grants and local council tax (known as a precept). Government grants account for around 58% with local council tax funding covering the remaining 42%.
3. On 17 December 2024, the Home Secretary published the Provisional Police Grant Report 2025/26 alongside the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire's Written Ministerial Statement. It included the following overall statement on policing funding for 2025/26:

'The settlement for 2025/26 provides a total of up to £17.4 billion for police forces, Funding available to Police and Crime Commissioners will increase by up to an additional £987 million in 2025/26, a 6% cash increase. This includes local flexibility to increase council tax precept by £14 for English forces.'

4. Full details of the proposed 2025/26 budget are set out in appendix 1. A consultation exercise was undertaken between 6 January and 20 January 2025, details of which are reported in appendix 1.
5. In addition to the budget, the Commissioner is asked to approve the Capital Strategy and Reserves Strategy. as set out in appendices 5 and 6.

FINANCIAL COMMENTS

6. The financial comments are included in the appendices to this report.

LEGAL COMMENTS

7. There are no specific legal comments associated with the report.

EQUALITY COMMENTS

8. There are no specific equality comments associated with the report.

Public access to information

Information in this form is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and other legislation. Part 1 of this form will be made available. Any facts/advice/recommendations that should not be made available on request should not be included in Part 1 but instead on the separate Part 2 form.

Is there a Part 2 form - No

Contact Officer: Wendy Bebbington, Chief Finance Officer (Constabulary)

Tel. No.: 01606 362035

Email: wendy.bebbington@cheshire.police.uk

CHIEF OFFICER DECLARATION (Chief Finance Officer (Constabulary) - Wendy Bebbington):

I have reviewed the proposal and I am satisfied it is correct, all relevant internal checks have been undertaken and it is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Signature



Date 22 January 2025

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER (OPCC) DECLARATION (Clare Hodgson):

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that financial, legal and equalities advice has been taken into account in the presentation of this report. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Signature



Date 22 January 2025

REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2025/26**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the Commissioner to finalise the budget for 2025/26 and meet their statutory duty to set a precept. An overview of the statutory requirements regarding the budget and precept setting including the timing of decision-making and interaction with the Police and Crime Panel is attached in Appendix 2.

INTRODUCTION

2. The Commissioner is required to set an annual balanced budget and precept, taking into account Government funding, precept regulations and organisational demands. This requirement is supported by the production of a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) with the annual budget forming the first year of the Strategy. The creation and maintenance of the MTFS is fundamental in promoting good financial planning and delivery of value for money.
3. The MTFS covers the period 2025 to 2030 and is based on several assumptions as set out within the report. In addition to the MTFS, there are a number of other financial strategies relating to reserves, capital, and treasury management that both inform and support the budget process. The current documents are available on the Commissioner's website via the following link – www.cheshire-pcc.gov.uk.

COMMISSIONER'S PRIORITIES FOR POLICING 2024-28

4. This budget is being set against the context of the Commissioner's new Police and Crime Plan and the wide range of innovative initiatives included within it. The budget proposal contained in this report will help ensure that the Plan and its objectives can be successfully delivered, and the communities of Cheshire kept safe. The Commissioner's Plan includes the following three key pillars:
 - Listen to the Public
 - Modernise
 - Reduce Crime

Listen to the Public

5. The Commissioner has set out his plans to engage widely with the public through the hosting of citizens assemblies in each of the nine Local Policing Units (LPUs) across the Constabulary area. This will enable the Commissioner and his team to hear the voices of local people and enable local policing teams to be better informed on the views of local residents.
6. The Commissioner's Plan includes a wide range of support for victims of crime, by commissioning tailored services to best meet their needs. By regularly reviewing police performance and holding the Chief Constable to account, the Commissioner will ensure that the police are using all the tools available to them. He will retain a sharp focus on the Constabulary handling victims with care, respect and sensitivity.

Modernise

7. The Commissioner is keen to drive efficiencies and explore how artificial intelligence and data analytics can help drive forward many of the priorities contained within his Plan. Innovative technology will be embraced to ensure that the service is well equipped to deal with current and emerging threats and ensuring the police are present when and where they are needed most. This will be supported by a culture which is open to new ideas and new ways of working. Wherever possible, the Commissioner will look to secure additional funding and work with key stakeholders to build on the successes already achieved.
8. This budget also makes provision for funding to ensure that the Constabulary estate is modernised and, despite the challenging financial context and the age and size of the estate, invest in existing properties in a sustainable and economic way to enable them to remain effective policing bases best placed to serve our communities. This will also include provision for the development of new, state of the operational bases in Wilmslow and Crewe.

Reduce Crime

9. Through his citizens assemblies, the Commissioner is clear how important neighbourhood policing, and a visible police presence is to all our communities and will support and review the development of the neighbourhood policing model where all communities will have a named contact. Through his scrutiny process, the Plan also sets out how response and call handling times will be monitored. The budget will support the continued use of tools such as Dytask which will ensure that hotspot areas are properly policed, and that communities and businesses can be best supported at times when they may need additional resources to address such issues as ASB. The Commissioner is currently developing the County's first stakeholder funded hotspot policing programme.
10. The Commissioner's Plan also includes a keen focus on violence against women and girls and driving up the reporting of domestic abuse incidents, to ensure the service provided to victims is the best it can be, and that those most at risk of harm are protected.
11. The budget support the Plan's focus on the prevention agenda and efforts to steer people away from criminal activity, looking to commission educational programmes where appropriate to tackle the scourge of knife crime and other serious violence, but also working with perpetrators and ex-offenders to rehabilitate them into our communities and deter them from further criminality. This budget also sets out the contributions that will be made to regional policing operations which focus on serious and organised crime and counter terrorism, for which the Commissioner and his regional counterparts will provide oversight and scrutiny.
12. The Plan sets out the work which will be undertaken with local community groups, utilising money seized through the Proceeds of Crime Act to develop projects which support local communities to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

13. The Commissioner's Police & Crime Plan is the key document in local policing which has helped develop this budget proposal and set out policing priorities for the coming four years.

FINANCIAL BACKGROUND

14. The Prime Minister's speech on 5 December 2024, included a clear remit on policing:

The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee will place a renewed focus on preventing the criminality plaguing the streets with visible, accessible officers that will deter offending and reassure locals they will be kept safe. It will have five key principles:

- 1) Police back on the beat. A Neighbourhood Policing Team in every local area, with intelligence-led and visible patrols, including in town centres and on high streets. It will ensure these officers are protected from being deployed elsewhere.*
- 2) Community led. A named, contactable officer for every neighbourhood, responsive to local problems, and residents and businesses having a say on the policing priorities for their area.*
- 3) Professional excellence. A new career pathway for neighbourhood policing, delivered by the College of Policing, with new standards for professional excellence to ensure neighbourhood policing teams are trained to be proactive problem-solvers.*
- 4) A crackdown on anti-social behaviour. Neighbourhood policing teams equipped with tougher tools, and supported by other agencies, to tackle persistent anti-social behaviour (ASB). This includes the new Respect Order to enable swift enforcement against prolific ASB offenders, and a dedicated lead officer in every force working with communities to develop a bespoke ASB action plan.*
- 5) Safer town centres. A crackdown on shop theft, street theft and assaults against retail workers, so local people can take back their streets from thugs and thieves.*

The Guarantee builds on the founding principles of British policing, emphasising the importance of policing by consent and preventing crime.

15. On the 17 December 2024, the Home Secretary published the Provisional Police Grant Report 2025/26 alongside the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire's Written Ministerial Statement. The key points from the statement are set out below.
16. The Government has set out the provisional policing funding settlement for the forthcoming financial year. For 2025/26, funding to police forces will total up to £17.4 billion, an increase of up to £986.9 million when compared to the 2024/25 settlement. This represents a real term increase in force funding of 3.5%, and a cash increase of 6.0%. The additional funding confirmed through this settlement will cover the costs of the police officer pay award and fund the recruitment and redeployment of more neighbourhood policing.
17. In addition to government funding, policing also receives a share of council tax (known as a precept). As set out in the Local Government policy statement on 28 November 2024, Police & Crime Commissioners will have the flexibility to raise the police precept by £14 for a Band D property for 2025/26.

18. The Government has set out what it expects in return for this funding as part of the Prime Minister's Plan for Change. The priorities are:
 - Increasing the number of officers, PCSOs and special constables in neighbourhood policing teams
 - Tackling violence against women and girls
 - Reducing knife crime
 - Cracking down on antisocial behaviour; and
 - By doing these things, increase public confidence in policing
19. The Chief Constable is clear that to deliver all of the above, the Constabulary must:
 - Deliver outstanding Neighbourhood Policing and protect the vulnerable
 - Proactively understand and prevent crime and harm
 - Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.
20. This budget proposal supports the above whilst taking into account the limiting financial factors.

2025/26 BUDGET PROPOSALS

21. The preparation of the 2025/26 budget commenced in 2024/25 utilising a planning process that had at its core the following key documents - the Commissioner's Police & Crime Plan; the Force Management Statement; the Chief Constable's Plan on a Page; local, regional, and national commitments; and the Strategic Policing Requirement. Recognising both demand and risks together with the Value for Money profiles, the Constabulary set out the key principles for that planning process:
 - Ensure the plans and proposals align to the priorities and demands as set out in the key documents, fully utilising the priority-based budgeting (PBB) process which examines all areas of the budget and matches resources according to priorities and risk;
 - Identify savings and efficiencies which can be made through the PBB process in support of the budget and spending plans.
 - Set a comprehensive, timely, balanced, and realistic budget;
 - Takes into account pay and price inflation and achievability of savings;
 - Complies with the approved treasury management strategy;
 - Complies with the approved reserves strategy;
 - Raises awareness of and communicates key financial messages both internally and externally;
 - Ensure budgets set are affordable and do not jeopardise financial stability either in the short or long term;
 - All spending plans will need to demonstrate that they can achieve value for money;

- Spending will be agreed only when the necessary funding is identified and approved;
- External funding will be sought wherever it can be used in a sustainable manner that does not lead to unforeseen costs; and
- Budget proposals will be publicised and consulted upon with stakeholders in an open and transparent manner.

PROPOSED REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26

22. Table 1 shows the outcome of the budget planning process with the proposed revenue budget for 2025/26. The impact of the threats and demands placed upon policing; commitments required; proposed savings and the total funding available to the Commissioner are reflected within these proposals.
23. The proposed revenue budget is considered vital by the Chief Constable in order to deliver a viable, sustainable police service to the public of Cheshire and to deliver the priorities and demands placed on the Constabulary.

Table 1: Proposed Revenue Budget	2025/26 £000
2024/25 Gross Expenditure Budget	290,495
Pay and Price Inflation	13,655
Legal & Unavoidable Commitments	5,804
Operational Demands and Pressures	1,719
Savings	-6,288
Use of Reserves	-72
2025/26 Gross Expenditure Budget	305,313
Other income and specific grants	-42,786
2025/26 Net Budget Requirement	262,527
Financed by:	
Government Police Grant & Formula Funding	-142,424
Legacy Council Tax Grant	-8,256
Council Tax Precept (assuming a £14 increase Band D)	-111,919
(Surplus)/Deficit on Collection Funds	72
2025/26 Net Budget Requirement	-262,527

INFLATION

24. Inflation in both pay and price terms is applied to budgets where appropriate. For 2025/26 the details are: pay awards are negotiated nationally and the increase is mandated for all forces. The proposed budget includes an estimated 2.8% pay award for September 2025 and the full year impact of the pay award from September 2024.
25. For non-pay items, the inflation applied is based on the Office of National Statistics Inflation Report using the most applicable inflation factor. However, the proposed budget acknowledges that certain non-pay items such as energy costs are significantly more expensive and additional inflation has been applied to those areas, together with contractual obligations for inflation based on specified indices. The following table shows the inflation applied.

Table 2: Inflation	2025/26 £000
Pay inflation (estimated)	11,476
Price (non-pay) inflation provision	2,179
Total Inflation	13,655

LEGAL & UNAVOIDABLE COMMITMENTS

26. Legal and unavoidable commitments come from two sources, the impact of decisions taken in previous years that have a financial impact in the forthcoming financial year and the financial impact of external decisions and changes such as the introduction of a new financial burden – for example the change to national insurance contributions or change in legislation. The following table shows those items included in the 2025/26 budget proposal.

Table 3: Legal & Unavoidable Commitments	2025/26 £000
Prior Year Decisions	256
Police Pay – including Neighbourhood Policing	1,082
National Insurance Increase (grant funded)	3,730
Collaborations	259
ANPR Mobile data	3
National Contributions	103
Revenue Contribution to capital/reserves	371
Total	5,804

27. Neighbourhood policing is at the heart of the Constabulary's service delivery, and we are proud to say that having a named officer/PCSO in each of our communities has been in place for several years. This has been reinforced as the officer numbers have increased through the uplift programme. As these officers complete their initial training and move to independent patrol within our neighbourhoods, their pay reflects this increased responsibility.
28. Under Sections 22B and 22C of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, Chief Officers and Commissioners have a duty to keep collaboration opportunities under review and to collaborate where it is in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of their own and other police force areas. This is in recognition that there are certain services required, which are not affordable by individual forces alone – e.g., firearms provision. The above costs reflect the additional uplift requirements to the collaborations Cheshire is involved in, subject to partner forces full agreement.
29. As direct capital funding is no longer provided, and as part of the Reserve Strategy, funding is set aside each year to support the annual replacement cycles of items such as laptops, phones, and vehicles. However, this is not always sufficient, and borrowing is used to fund any shortfall. This budget provides sufficient funding to meet the interest and set-aside for the repayment of the borrowing, based on the capital programme included within this report.

OPERATIONAL DEMANDS AND PRESSURES

30. The following table sets out the additional investments included within the proposed budget and linked to the priorities set out earlier in the report. As part of the priority-based budgeting process, the demand and pressures set out in the Force Management Statement are used to inform the decisions alongside national and local priorities.

Table 4 – Operational Demands & Pressures	2025/26 £000
Investment in digital technology and licences	728
Investment in forensic services	66
Investment in neighbourhood policing	15
Investment in vulnerable person services (SARC)	12
Investment in major investigation	139
Investment in information management	14
Investment in community & citizen assemblies	125
Litigation and collision damage	484
Other minor changes	136
Total	1,719

31. The Government set out in the statement accompanying the Provisional Settlement that they are ‘determined to work with policing to maximise the potential of productivity and innovation, ensuring officers are equipped with the tools they need to keep our communities safe’. This is matched by the Commissioner’s priority of ‘Technology and Innovation’. Additional funding is being allocated to support the digital technology and software required to ensure our officers spend the maximum time out within our communities.
32. Additional funding has also been provided to support victims of crime, achieve justice, and ensure the most vulnerable persons have access to the appropriate facilities such as the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).
33. Finally, this budget recognises the increasing litigation activity within policing across all forces both in terms of operational activity and collisions. The cost of such litigation includes court costs, defence, and where appropriate payments to claimants, all of which have seen a significant increase over the last few years.

SAVINGS

34. A key requirement of the funding settlement is an assurance that public spending provides value for money and funding is prioritised in line with the Police and Crime Plan, operational demand etc. As part of the budget process, non-pay expenditure was scrutinised to ensure that all efficiency opportunities have been maximised without impacting on service delivery and resources focussed on key priorities. The savings opportunities are set out below.

Table 5 – Savings	2025/26 £000
Vacancy Management	-2,390
Loss of Grant/Income - remove associated spend	-1,509
Additional Income incl. interest	-682
Increase to vacancy factor	-522
Contract Savings	-851
Review of non-pay expenditure	-323
Other minor changes	-11
Total	-6,288

35. Every effort has been made to ensure that savings are both deliverable and least impactful on service delivery. However, it is recognised that the level by which expenditure is increasing is not fully covered by the additional funding provided and therefore efficiencies and savings are necessary. The Constabulary operates a rigorous vacancy management process whereby all staff vacancies are reviewed to ascertain whether there are different ways of doing that role, how critical it is to the current priorities and where appropriate, whether it can be removed. The above savings reflect this process and have been achieved without the need for compulsory redundancies.
36. As with any organisation, there is always staff turnover and usually a period of time between someone leaving and their replacement starting. This is reflected in a vacancy factor within the budget. As part of the 2025/26 budget, this factor has been benchmarked with other forces and increased to 6% accordingly, providing additional savings as shown above.
37. As part of the standard budget setting process, a full review is undertaken of all non-pay expenditure including contracts etc. This has delivered around £1.2m in savings.

RISKS AND SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

38. For 2025/26, there is a reasonable degree of certainty based on the Provisional Grant Settlement published on 17 December 2024. However, there remain some outstanding issues affecting next year such as the Counter-Terrorism Policing Grant. Any changes to the funding will be reported to the Commissioner as soon as they are known together with the associated proposed changes to the budget.
39. As with any assumptions, there are risks that the actual outcome will be different. There are key assumptions included within this proposed budget that could significantly affect the proposed budget such as pay awards where a 0.5% movement in the pay award would have a potential £1.1m impact on the budget. Inflationary pressures have been reflected in this proposed budget, but with such volatility at present, the estimates made may change.
40. Reserves are held to provide flexibility in-year for such incidences and the Reserves Strategy included within this report covers this in more detail.

COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT

41. A precept is levied on the Council Tax for policing in Cheshire. It is the responsibility of the Commissioner to set the level of precept as part of the budget setting process. On 18 December 2024, the Secretary of State published a draft of the Referendums Relating to Council Tax Increases (Principles) (England) Report 2025-26 which set out the council tax referendum principles. These principles set the maximum increase permitted before a local referendum is required. For policing this was set at £14 on a Band D property for 2025/26. However, it is for the Commissioner to decide the level of precept annually. For 2025/26 the Commissioner is proposing to increase the precept at £14 on a Band D property. This represents a 5.3% increase from 2024/25.
42. To calculate the level of Council Tax funding, each local authority calculates the taxbase (the assimilated number of council tax bills issued) taking into account changes in the number of houses, council tax benefits etc. Compared to 2024/25, the overall taxbase has increased by 6767.78 compared to last year when the increase was 4172.28. The following table shows the proposed level of precepts for each local authority and the individual amount levied per each Council Tax band.

Table 6: Proposed Precepts 2025/26	Number of Band D Equivalents	Precept on Collection Fund £
Cheshire East	163,261.10	45,213,529
Cheshire West & Chester	131,666.40	36,463,693
Halton	36,936.00	10,229,056
Warrington	72,262.00	20,012,238
TOTAL	404,125.50	111,918,516

Band	2025/26	2024/25	Change per year £	Change per week £p
A	184.63	175.29	9.34	0.18
B	215.40	204.51	10.89	0.21
C	246.17	233.72	12.45	0.24
D	276.94	262.94	14.00	0.27
E	338.48	321.37	17.11	0.33
F	400.02	379.80	20.22	0.39
G	461.57	438.23	23.34	0.45
H	553.88	525.88	28.00	0.54

43. In addition to the above precept, each of the four local authorities holds a council tax collection fund; this is a separate fund that records the income and expenditure relating to council tax. Any surplus or deficit on the fund is due to or paid for by the individual authorities, the Police & Crime Commissioner and Cheshire Fire Authority respectively. The net deficit amount declared and payable by the Commissioner in 2025/26 amounts to £72k, funded by earmarked reserve set aside for this purpose.

COMMISSIONING

44. For 2025/26, the approach to commissioning will continue to focus on victims of crime with the aim of ensuring that appropriate services are in place to assist them to cope with their ordeal and recover as best they can. The Commissioner will utilise the understanding gained from the Cheshire Victims Needs Assessment alongside the Serious Violence Needs Assessment to prioritise areas for development. A refresh of the sexual abuse needs assessment is underway. The initial supporting service for victims across Cheshire is Cheshire CARES, to which all reports of crime to the Constabulary are referred. Cheshire CARES supports victims from the outset and throughout their journey through cope and recovery; furthermore, it is complemented through the provision of enhanced support to victims of Hate Crime delivered by Remedi.
45. The Commissioner has additional responsibilities to have specialist services available, e.g., to support victims of rape and sexual abuse, child sexual abuse and domestic abuse as well as to provide a restorative justice (RJ) service. The costs of victims' services commissioned are funded through an allocation provided from the Ministry of Justice. The core funding allocation for the 2025/26 Victims Grant has been reduced and now is approximately £1.1m but as in previous years opportunities to attract further funding to support will be explored. Consequently, the Commissioner will continue to work with partners across all sectors to identify and address gaps and/or emerging areas for victims' services and to drive the effectiveness of the service commissioned through the Victim's Grant Fund in 2025/26. The Restorative Justice services delivered by Remedi will continue in an effort to reduce future offending whilst also meeting the needs of victims.
46. A further £2.6 Million (approx.) has been obtained by the PCC for 2025/26 over and above the core grant to support front line Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse services, this not only supports front line victims but will also deliver pan Cheshire Domestic Abuse Perpetrator interventions.
47. In 2024/25, a further £335,000 was secured by the Commissioner under the Safer Streets 5; this is finalised in March 2025 and at the moment there is no indication of future funding but, where available, it will be pursued.
48. During 2024/25 the PCC collaborated with partners to commission services to reduce instances of serious violence in Cheshire and, in total, approx. £590,000 additional funding was obtained. At this time there is uncertainty around the level of funding in this space for 2025/26, but any opportunities will be explored.
49. In recognition of the commitment to improve the safety of our roads, the PCC has part funded an Average Speed Scheme on Warrington Road, Glazebury, Warrington and supported the installation of a Parish Council Average Speed Scheme Helsby during 2024/25. Other initiatives continue into 2025/26.

50. As is set out earlier in the summary of the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan, the PCC is exploring a range of other innovative projects for 2025/26 whereby we hope to further extend our preventative activity to reduce serious violence (in partnership); build upon our Perpetrator work to explore how this approach can be maximised; explore how the PCC can support increased visibility in identified Hotspot areas (in partnership).
51. The PCC is committed to maximising the use of technology and in 2025/26 we will continue to explore opportunities for further funding for Cheshire in this space towards keeping the public safe.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME

52. In addition to the revenue budget, a programme of capital investment is proposed for 2025/26. This programme links to the major strategies such as Estates, Digital Business Technology and Fleet together with the annual replacement cycle for assets such as equipment.
53. Funding for this investment, is no longer supported through Government grants and therefore is now covered by capital receipts (the net proceeds from the sales of assets), reserves held by the Commissioner, contributions and borrowing. The contributions include funding set aside within the general budget each year. A summary of the proposed programme and associated funding is shown below.

Table 7: Capital Strategy	2025/26 £000
Annual Replacement Schemes:	
Fleet Vehicles	2,684
IT and Communications	1,345
New Schemes:	
Estates - Maintenance & Environmental	635
Estates Strategy - Crewe and Northern	5,900
IT and Communications	2,000
Equipment	0
Collaboration/Funded Vehicles	801
Capital Expenditure	13,365

54. Full details of the individual schemes within the capital programme are provided in Appendix 4 of this report and in the Commissioner's Capital Strategy attached at Appendix 4. The proposed funding for the above capital investment is set out in the following table.

Table 8: Capital Financing	2025/26 £000
General/Specific capital grants	0
Capital Receipts	4,320
Revenue Contributions to Capital	4,173
Revenue and Capital Reserves	26
External Contributions to Capital	329
HQ IT Reserve	280
Borrowing	4,237
Total Funding	13,365

ROBUSTNESS OF ESTIMATES

55. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 places a requirement on Chief Finance Officers to report on the robustness of the estimates used in the preparation of this proposed budget. Details of how this requirement is met are in Appendix 3.

RESERVES

56. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 also places a requirement on Chief Finance Officers to formally report on the adequacy of the reserves. The Chief Finance Officers assess this in the context of the strategic, operational, and financial risks and opportunities facing the Commissioner and the Constabulary.
57. While holding reserves is a recognised and recommended financial management tool, the levels of such reserves must remain prudent, appropriate to the level of risk and opportunity and not excessive. This is set out within the Commissioner's Reserves Strategy attached at Appendix 5.

CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC AND BUSINESS RATEPAYERS

58. A formal consultation exercise on the police precept was undertaken between 6 January and 20 January 2025. The survey was carried out online and paper copies were also printed and distributed to people who requested them.
59. Residents were encouraged to complete the survey via social media platforms e.g. Facebook, Bluesky, LinkedIn, Instagram and Nextdoor, as well as via Cheshire Police Alert, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner website and media activity.
60. All the parish councils in Cheshire were written out to requesting their support in promoting the survey as well as help in reaching those audiences who weren't online. Many parish councils helped to spread the word, either by promoting on their own social media or newsletters as well as distributing paper copies.
61. Many local organisations representing different communities within the county were also written out to requesting support in reaching different groups of people. Several came back offering their support and help in promoting the survey.
62. The key messages provided via the survey and its promotion was around how the Home Office has promised more neighbourhood police officers but due to rising costs,

inflation and the increased complexity and demand on the police, how pressure is building on services. It highlighted that efficiencies and savings have been made but there is still a budget shortfall. It also acknowledged the financial pressures that many households face as they continue to navigate the cost-of-living crisis.

63. The consultation ended at midday on Monday 20 January 2025. A total number of 1,694 responses were received online, with paper copies still being collated. Full results are expected by the first week in February, but paper submissions are unlikely to change the result due to only being a small percentage of overall responses.
64. Before a question about the police precept, residents were provided with a table detailing the impact of each option on each Council Tax Band and were encouraged to check this table before answering. A link was also provided so that people could check their Band if they were unsure. The following question was asked after the precept information was given:

Which one of these options for next year's police budget would you support?

*Please note that while the precept and these options are based on a band D household, the most common council tax band in Cheshire is band A and nearly two thirds of households are in bands A-C. Refer to the table above to see how each option would affect you. **

Option 1 - No increase. This would require a reduction in services significantly beyond the £6.3 million in savings already identified.

Option 2 - Increase of £1.17 per month (£14 per year) for band D. This would allow Cheshire Constabulary to maintain the improved level of service that has been achieved over this past year and enhance neighbourhood policing.

*Option 3 - Increase of up to £2.33 (£28 a year) per month for band D. This would allow for further investment in key areas like technology and protecting vulnerable people as well as more enhancements to neighbourhood policing. This increase would raise additional funds (over and above a £14 increase) of more than £5.6m which could fund up to 95 additional officers.**

**Based on the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) guidelines, the direct cost of employing a police constable is £59,450 and the direct cost of employing a PCSO is £43,920. Based on these figures, if the increase were to be spent purely on officers or PCSOs, this amount could fund 95 additional officers or 128 PCSOs.*

65. 67% (1,128) of respondents agreed to support some form of increase to the precept. The table below shows the breakdown of responses.

Survey completed via:	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Total
Online	566	517	611	1,694
Percentage	33%	31%	36%	

The full results of this survey, including the paper responses will be published on the Cheshire PCC website at www.cheshire-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/have-your-say/outcomes-and-results/.

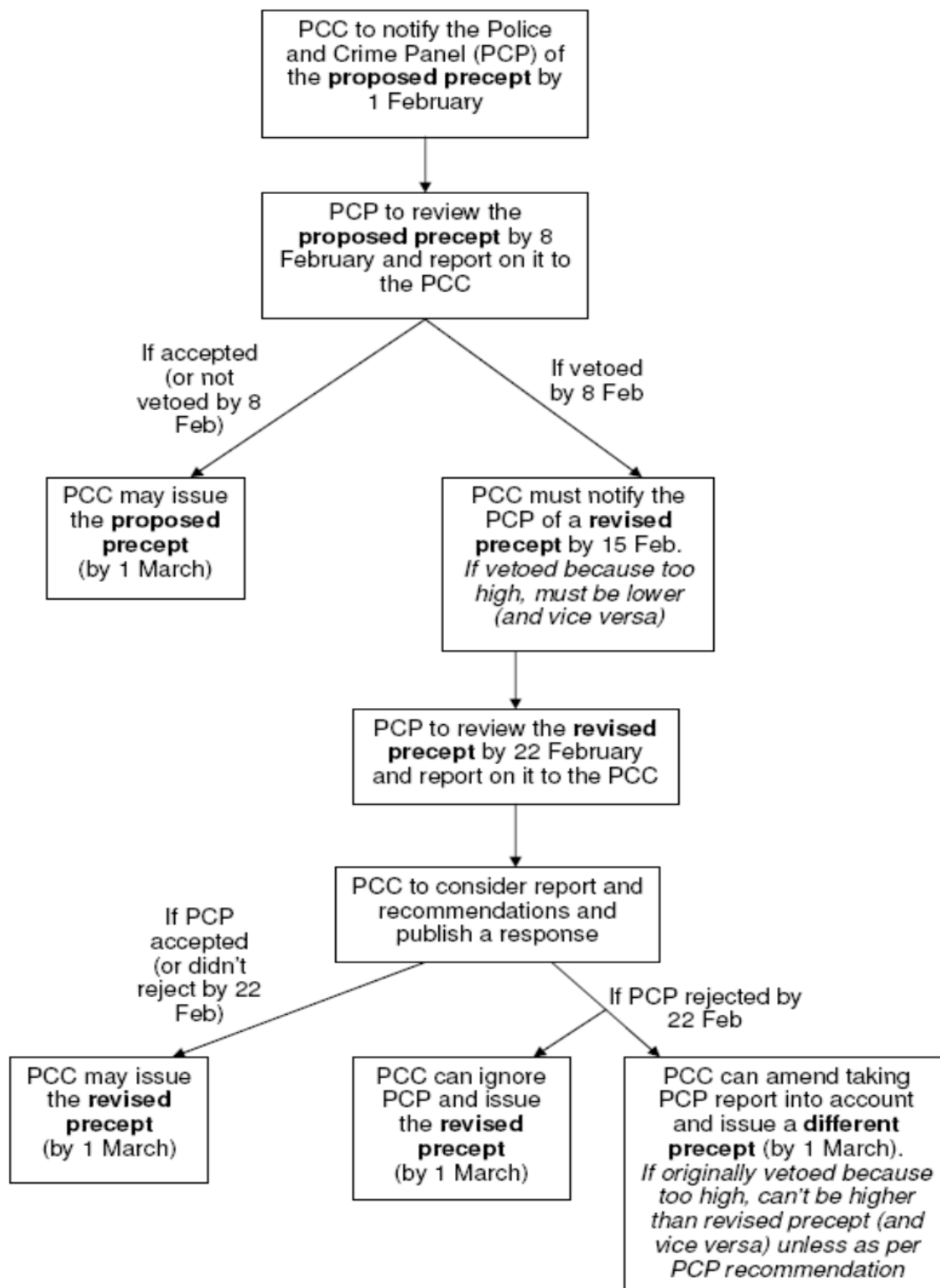
BUDGET AND PRECEPT SETTING TIMETABLE

PURPOSE

- a. To provide the Commissioner with an overview of the statutory requirements regarding budget and precept setting and the interaction with the Police and Crime Panel. It also provides a copy of the internal timetable developed to enable the Commissioner to meet the statutory timetable.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

- b. The statutory requirements for precepting authorities to set a budget and issue a precept for the next financial year are set out in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. They include significant detail on how budget estimates and the precept must be calculated. The Police Act 1996 and the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 amended these provisions for the change to police authorities and Police and Crime Commissioners respectively, but the basic statutory requirements remain the same.
- c. Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and The Police and Crime Panels (Precepts and Chief Constable Appointments) Regulations 2012 provide further detail on the process the Commissioner must follow for notifying the Police and Crime Panel of the proposed precept by 1 February of the relevant financial year (Section 3 of the 2012 Act). They also cover the interaction between the Panel and the Commissioner leading to the determination of the precept by the Commissioner by 1 March. The process is set out with the due dates diagrammatically in Annex A.

PCC PRECEPT APPROVAL (Final Regulations)

ROBUSTNESS OF ESTIMATES

- a. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 places a requirement on Chief Finance Officers to report on the robustness of the estimates used in preparing the budget.
- b. The Commissioner has a policy and expenditure planning process that takes account of the service scenario and financial scenario in some detail for 2025/26. Alongside this, future capital programmes have been produced taking into account forecast Government funding, borrowing limits and council tax. For 2025/26 borrowing levels are also guided by the prudential indicators as set out in the Treasury Management Strategy.
- c. For 2025/26, full consideration of these issues had led to:
 - Policy and expenditure proposals that reflect the Government's Provisional Police Grant Settlement together with the on-going revenue impact of new capital projects, whilst recognising the outstanding issues and uncertainties.
 - A proposed capital-financing budget based on 2025/26 capital programme.
- d. When using estimates in preparing the budget every effort is taken to ensure that they take into account the most up to date data. However, it should be noted that there are a number of areas where the actual impact could vary from the estimates used in setting the budget. The principal areas are:
 - Pay awards, pension increases, national reviews of pay & inflation
 - Service financial performance (i.e., variances on budgets)
 - Ability to achieve projected savings
 - Operational demands
- e. To provide for all potential scenarios that may arise would be prohibitively expensive and result in demands on council taxpayers considerably higher than likely need. For 2025/26 £13.66m has been provided for pay and price increases.
- f. Many factors can affect financial performance in year including under or over-achievement of efficiency savings, income, and other financial targets. The Commissioner takes a number of steps to minimise the impact by:
 - Seeking wherever possible to explore in full the implications and achievability of policy and expenditure options before the budget is set.
 - Promoting a robust approach to financial management requiring budget holders to monitor expenditure against budget and to take prompt action in reporting and responding to projected variances.
 - Quarterly reporting of the projected budgetary outturn supplemented by monthly exception reports to prompt remedial action if necessary.
 - Creation of appropriate and proportionate contingencies.
- g. It should be noted that while every effort is taken to ensure the budget is balanced, there is always the possibility of variances to the budget occurring. The Commissioner holds reserves to mitigate this as set out in the Reserves Strategy.

<u>CAPITAL PROGRAMME</u>	2025/26 £000
<u>Prior Year Schemes</u>	
Estates Strategy - Major Projects - Crewe	1,400
Custody Desk replacement project	250
Custody Suites	80
Blacon DHQ roof remedials	50
Ref areas, welfare rooms – CSH, Arpley St, Runcorn (Phase 1)	50
UWSU	26
	1,856
<u>New Scheme</u>	
Estates Essential Maintenance and Improvement Schemes	50
Forensics Access restrictions	30
Decarbonisation Measures *	75
Refurbishment of HQ ground floor meeting spaces	50
Estates Strategy - Crewe	3,500
Estates Strategy - Northern Stations	1,000
IT Infrastructure - Servers	225
Technology Refresh – 3 Yr Refresh	1,080
Mitel Handset Replacement - Teams	50
Replacement of Body Worn Video	850
Body Worn Video Isilon Expansion (Storage)	300
FCC Virtual Infrastructure Hardware	800
Technology Refresh – E-Forensics	40
Annual Vehicle Replacement Programme	2,565
Armed Alliance Vehicle Replacements	600
Dogs Alliance Vehicle Replacements	175
Workshop Capital Equipment	119
	13,365

Starred items – marked *. Any capital scheme can be ‘starred’ to reflect the Commissioner’s agreement in principle, but no further action can be taken without further approval being obtained when more detailed plans are available. For example, the Estates Strategy includes several major schemes which will be submitted for approval individually as and when details proposals are prepared.

Capital Strategy 2025-2030



Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner



Cheshire
Constabulary

Introduction

Welcome to the 2025-30 Capital Strategy.

This strategy sets out the proposed investments in assets over the next five years. It is fundamentally linked to the Estates; Fleet and Digital Strategies which form the detailed plans summarised within this Strategy and to the priorities set out in the Commissioner's new Police and Crime Plan.

Funding for these investments comes through specific grants; capital receipts (the sale proceeds from existing assets); reserves; contributions and borrowing. Borrowing will incur costs for interest payable and the need to set aside sufficient funds to repay the loan. Therefore, borrowing is only used as a last resort or for long-term assets such as Estates.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Roberts'.

**Chief Constable
Mark Roberts QPM**



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Price'.

**Police and Crime Commissioner
Dan Price**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities establishes a framework that supports local strategic planning, asset management and appropriate options appraisal.
- 1.2. The objectives of the Prudential Code are to ensure that the capital plans of an organisation are affordable, prudent, and sustainable and the treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice and in full understanding of the risks involved.

2. DEFINITION

- 2.1. To utilise the full extent of the Prudential Code and its framework, it is essential that there is a clear understanding of what is capital expenditure. Unless expenditure qualifies as capital it will normally fall outside the scope of the Code and its framework and be charged to revenue in the period in which its goods or services were received. If expenditure does qualify as capital, there are opportunities to finance such spend from any capital receipts held or to spread the cost over future years in line with the life of the asset(s) purchased.
- 2.2. In the main, expenditure must meet one or more of the following conditions for it to be classified as capital:
 - Spend results in the acquisition, construction, or enhancement of an asset (tangible or intangible) in accordance with 'proper practices';
 - Spend meets one of the definitions specified in regulations made under the 2003 Local Government Act; or
 - The Secretary of State makes a direction that the expenditure can be treated as capital.

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1. The capital programme requirements of policing nationally are by nature limited in comparison to other public sector organisations such as local authorities who have diverse responsibilities to prioritise including schools, housing, and highways. Certainly, this is true of the Constabulary with capital expenditure plans largely limited to replacing and upgrading essential operational assets (for example, the estate, vehicles, equipment, and IT/communications infrastructure) together with individual ad-hoc capital investment schemes and those aimed at improving efficiency and operational performance/priorities.

- 3.2. One of the three key pillars of the Commissioner's new Police and Crime Plan is 'Modernise', the other two being 'Listen to the Public' and 'Reduce Crime'. The capital strategy incorporates the Modernise pillar through the police estate and technology and innovation.
- 3.3. The Commissioner maintains rolling medium-term revenue and capital plans (summarised in a Medium-Term Financial Strategy – MTFS) that usually extend for 4-5 years. The plans are drawn up, reassessed and extended annually and if required, re-prioritised to enable the Constabulary to achieve the aims and objectives established in the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan and to support national drivers like the Strategic Policing Requirement and Home Office national priorities.
- 3.4. Historically, capital grant funding was allocated by the Government, but this is no longer the case and has been replaced by annual revenue contributions to capital. This helps fund annual replacement of vehicles, IT and operational equipment and maintenance of police buildings, but is insufficient to meet all capital expenditure. As such, with limited reserves held, the need to borrow has increased. Borrowing incurs ongoing costs of interest payments and the funding set aside to repay the loan in due course. As borrowing incurs costs, there has been a programme of increasing year-on-year revenue contributions to fund the capital programme in order to meet the annual replacement programme, with borrowing limited to invest to save or invest to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- 3.5. Key focuses of the Capital Programme plans, all aligned to achieving the Commissioners pillars above are:
 - To ensure the property estate remains modern and fit for the future; at the heart of and accessible to our communities, promoting police engagement in our communities, effective collaborative and partnership working and being innovative, economic, efficient, and sustainable.
 - To support front line operations by delivering high quality vehicles which are safe, fit for purpose and meet the needs of modern-day policing.
 - The replacement and upgrade of other core assets where necessary, e.g., operational equipment and communication infrastructure.
 - Development of improved capability and responsiveness.
 - To ensure provision is made for Digital Business Technology to maintain and develop the existing infrastructure and invest in the core technologies, such as AI and data analytics, required to provide innovative digital policing services to maximise intelligence led policing.

- Invest to Save Schemes.

- 3.6. The Commissioner maintains separate focussed long-term Estates, Environmental, Fleet and Digital/Agile Working strategies setting out the overall direction of these key areas and priorities, all of which feed into this overarching Capital Strategy.
- 3.7. The plans acknowledge the constrained financial position of the Commissioner and therefore, maximise both the available financial resources and the capacity that the Constabulary has to manage such projects.

4. GOVERNANCE

- 4.1. The annual budget setting process is an ongoing process with key stakeholder groups assisting departmental managers to identify change proposals and develop business cases for future capital investment requirements and ideas aligned with the Police and Crime Plan priorities and the Constabulary's Plan on a Page.
- 4.2. Investment proposals must explicitly identify the organisational requirement, rationale, deliverables, benefits, links to the Commissioner's and/or Constabulary priorities, and costs in terms of both capital investment and ongoing revenue consequences.
- 4.3. Based on an agreed budget setting timetable, investment proposals will be submitted for presentation to and scrutiny review by the Senior Command Team (SCT) along with an initial view of potential affordability. Prioritisation is then made, taking into account the following in order of priority:
 - Unavoidable (statutory, contractual, or tortuous liability);
 - Operational Need (enables continuity of agreed service delivery levels and priorities) and linked to the Force Management Statement;
 - Police and Crime Plan Improvement Priority;
 - Other (efficiency, invest to save, leverage of external funding, etc.).
- 4.4. An updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), including a proposed Capital Programme, is then presented to the Commissioner, providing views on affordability, potential funding issues and options.
- 4.5. A final version of the MTFS will be presented to the Commissioner for approval in January each year, reflecting the known funding position and any further developmental work on the plan. This formal approval agrees the capital budget for

the following year and acknowledges the intention for planning purposes of the remaining years of the MTFS.

- 4.6. Any approved budget item, capital, or revenue can be 'starred' to reflect the Commissioner's agreement in principle, but no further action can be taken without further approval being obtained when more detailed plans are available.
- 4.7. Where in year additions to the approved Capital Programme are identified, a business case will be prepared and reviewed at SCT Business Meeting. The Senior Command Team will then submit to the Commissioner for consideration and approval, including details of how the new scheme is to be funded, delivered and benefits realised, noting any ongoing MTFS implications.
- 4.8. Currently approved Financial Regulations (Section 4.3) specify individual officer roles and responsibilities relating to the capital programme along with a number of key controls as follows:
 - Specific approval by the Commissioner for at least three-year capital programme which is the key document for planning and controlling of capital expenditure;
 - 'Starred' items require further approval before expenditure can be incurred;
 - Expenditure on capital schemes not included in the programme and/or which would involve future years' commitments is subject to the approval of the Commissioner;
 - Steps are taken to enable land required for the purposes of the programme to be acquired in due time;
 - A scheme and estimate, including the associated revenue expenditure, is prepared for each capital project for approval by the Commissioner;
 - Any scheme not commenced within two years of approval will be deemed null and void and removed from the capital programme;
 - Prudential Indicators covering affordability, capital expenditure, external debt and treasury management;
- 4.9. Following approval of the capital programme, a programme manager or project manager and a user representative are identified for each capital project. That individual is responsible for managing the project implementation and delivering its objectives. For all projects within the capital programme, a Chief Officer is identified as project sponsor.
- 4.10. Monitoring progress against capital schemes is reported on at least a quarterly basis to the SCT Business Meeting and to the Joint Management Board.

- 4.11. Once projects have been completed the programme or project manager completes a post-implementation review for the major capital projects. The post-project report is reviewed by the appropriate programme board and the Senior Command Team, if required.
- 4.12. This information can then be used to learn lessons and make any improvements identified during project implementation.

5. FUNDING STREAMS

- 5.1. Capital expenditure can be funded from a number of sources as set out below:

- **Government Grants** – these are either general grants which can be used to fund any capital spend approved by the Commissioner or specific grants which can only be used to fund specific projects in line with any conditions placed with the grant – *note general capital grants are no longer provided*;
- **Capital Receipts** – when an asset held by the Commissioner is sold, the proceeds are held in reserve to be used either to fund future capital expenditure or to repay debt. They cannot be used to fund revenue expenditure except where specifically approved by Central Government in line with strict flexible use of capital receipts rules for a limited period;
- **Reserves** – funds can be set aside and held in earmarked reserves if known expenditure is to be incurred at a future date. These reserves can then be used to fund such expenditure be it capital or revenue. In terms of capital expenditure, it may be known that a specific asset may need replacing in 10 years and therefore funds are set aside each year to build up the reserve to fund the replacement. Details of the reserves held are found within the Commissioner's Reserves Strategy;
- **External Contributions** – these are funds or grants provided by external organisations such as collaboration partners or local authorities for specifically agreed capital expenditure; and
- **Borrowing** – the Commissioner is permitted in law to take out loans or financing to fund capital expenditure. The Prudential Code sets out the requirements under which such borrowing must be undertaken including affordability, prudence, and cost-effectiveness. Any borrowing will incur costs for interest payable and the need to set aside sufficient funds to repay the loan. These costs impact on the revenue budget.

6. CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 6.1. The following table shows the Commissioner's overall capital programme and how it is to be funded from 2025 to 2030. Please note that the figures quoted include both in-year approvals and schemes rolled forward from previous years. As such the table represents estimates of total capital expenditure in each year:

Table 1: Capital Strategy	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000
Annual Replacement Schemes:					
Fleet Vehicles	2,684	2,913	1,409	3,485	1,435
IT and Communications	1,345	1,470	1,545	1,570	1,445
New Schemes:					
Estates - Maintenance & Environmental	635	950	525	325	100
Estates Strategy 2021-2031	5,900	7,730	0	0	0
IT and Communications	2,000	923	1,962	9,045	1,556
Operational Equipment	0	150	150	150	150
Collaboration/Funded Vehicles	801	422	392	500	340
Capital Expenditure	13,365	14,558	5,983	15,075	5,026
Financed by:					
Capital Receipts	4,320	4,375	500	0	0
Revenue Contributions to Capital	4,173	3,418	3,918	4,418	4,444
Revenue and Capital Reserves	26	280	0	0	100
External Contributions to Capital	329	60	167	213	102
HQ IT Reserve	280	280	280	280	280
Borrowing	4,237	6,145	1,118	10,164	100
Total Funding	13,365	14,558	5,983	15,075	5,026

7. AFFORDABILITY

- 7.1. Capital expenditure plans are a key driver of treasury management activity. The funding of such plans impacts on cash balances and borrowing need in the short and longer terms. The ongoing consequences of these decisions have a direct impact on the annual revenue budget. As such, having regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, the Commissioner sets and reviews a number of prudential indicators showing the proposed capital expenditure plans, how they are to be funded, the impact on the organisation's finances and their affordability in terms of the impact on revenue budgets.
- 7.2. Full details and commentary on the prudential indicators are found within the Commissioner's Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26. Along with controls and limits relating to levels of capital expenditure and resulting borrowing requirements, these prudential indicators also include a specific affordability indicator, below,

which provides an indication of the impact of the above capital expenditure plans and their financing proposals on the overall finances and precept (council tax):

Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26

Table 5: Ratio of financing costs to net revenue funding.

2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate	2029/30 Estimate
1.16%	1.13%	1.19%	1.41%	1.53%	1.50%	1.85%

- 7.3. This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital, (borrowing and other long-term obligation costs net of investment income), against the net revenue stream. The estimates of financing costs include current commitments and the proposals included in the budget/medium-term financial strategy.
8. RISK MANAGEMENT
- 8.1. Risk is the threat that an event or action will adversely affect the Commissioner's ability to achieve their desired outcomes and the Constabulary's ability to execute their strategies successfully. Risk management is the process of identifying risks, evaluating their potential consequences, and determining the most effective methods of managing them and/or responding to them. It is both a means of minimising the costs and disruption to the organisation caused by undesired events and of ensuring that staff understand and appreciate the element of risk in all their activities.
- 8.2. The aim is to reduce the frequency of adverse risk events occurring (where possible), minimise the severity of their consequences if they do occur, or to consider whether risk can be transferred to other parties. The corporate risk register sets out the key risks to the successful delivery of corporate aims and priorities and outlines the key controls and actions to mitigate and reduce risks or maximise opportunities.
- 8.3. To manage risk effectively, the risks associated with each capital project need to be systematically identified, analysed, influenced, and monitored. It is important to identify the appetite for risk by each scheme and for the capital programme as a whole, especially when investing in complex business change programmes. Where greater risks are identified as necessary to achieve desired outcomes, the organisation will seek to mitigate or manage those risks to a tolerable level. All key risks identified as part of the capital planning process are considered for inclusion in the corporate risk register.
- 8.4. The Chief Finance Officers (OPCC & Constabulary) will report jointly on the deliverability, affordability and risk associated with this Capital Strategy and the

associated capital programme. Where appropriate they will have access to specialised advice to enable them to reach their conclusions.

- 8.5. Credit Risk - The risk that an organisation with which we have contracted to deliver capital projects becomes insolvent and cannot complete the agreed contract. We will ensure that robust due diligence procedures cover the appointment of partners and contractors relating to capital programme delivery. Where possible contingency plans will be identified at the outset.
- 8.6. Liquidity Risk - This is the risk that the timing of any cash inflows from a project will be delayed, for example if other organisations do not make their contributions when agreed. There is also a risk that the cash inflows will be less than expected, for example due to the effects of inflation, interest rates or exchange rates. Our exposure to this risk will be monitored via the revenue and capital budget monitoring processes and mitigating actions taken promptly where appropriate.
- 8.7. Interest and Exchange Rate Risk - This is the risk that interest rates or exchange rates will move in a way that has an adverse effect on the value of capital expenditure or the expected financial returns from a project. Rates will be reviewed as part of the ongoing monitoring arrangements to identify such adverse effects. As far as possible our exposure to this risk will be mitigated via robust contract terms and when necessary, contract re-negotiations.
- 8.8. Inflation Risk - This is the risk that rates of inflation will move in a way that has an adverse effect on the value of capital expenditure or the expected financial returns from a project. Rates of inflation will be reviewed as part of the ongoing monitoring arrangements to identify such adverse effects. As far as possible our exposure to this risk will be mitigated via robust contract terms and when necessary, contract re-negotiations.
- 8.9. Legal and Regulatory Risk - This is the risk that changes in laws or regulation make a capital project more expensive or time consuming to complete, make it no longer cost-effective or make it illegal or not advisable to complete. Before entering into capital expenditure or making capital investments, the Commissioner will understand the powers under which the investment is made. Forthcoming changes to relevant laws and regulations will be kept under review and factored into any capital bidding and programme monitoring processes.
- 8.10. Fraud, Error, and Corruption - This is the risk that financial losses will occur due to errors or fraudulent or corrupt activities. Officers involved in any of the processes around capital expenditure or funding are required to follow the agreed Code of Corporate Governance. The Constabulary has a strong ethical culture, which is

evidenced through our values, principles, and appropriate behaviour. This is supported by the national Code of Ethics and detailed policies such as Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Declaration of Interests.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL & GOVERNANCE (ESG) CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1. This Commissioner is supportive of the principles for responsible investment (www.unpri.org) and will seek to bring ESG factors into the decision-making process for investments. Within this, the Commissioner is also appreciative of the Statement on ESG in Credit Risk and Ratings which commits signatories to incorporating ESG into credit ratings and analysis in a systemic and transparent way. The Commissioner utilises the ratings provided by Fitch, Moody's, and Standard & Poor's to assess creditworthiness, which do include analysis of ESG factors when assigning ratings.
- 9.2. Typical ESG considerations that are considered by these Credit Rating Agencies when assigning credit ratings to counterparties, and therefore by the Commissioner when selecting investment and borrowing counterparties, include:
 - Environmental: Emissions and air quality, energy and waste management, waste and hazardous material, exposure to environmental impact.
 - Social: Human rights, community relations, customer welfare, labour relations, employee wellbeing, exposure to social impacts.
 - Governance: Management structure, governance structure, group structure, financial transparency.
- 9.3. The Commissioner will continue to evaluate additional ESG-related metrics and assessment processes that could be incorporated into his investment process and will update accordingly.

10. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE ACTIONS

- 10.1. This Capital Strategy currently looks ahead over the next five years to 2030 together with the associated funding. Included is the current Estates Strategy 2021-2031 which recognises that planned changes to the estate's footprint require additional capital financing. The latest forecast costs in respect of the in-progress Crewe and Wilmslow major projects, which will be completed during the period covered by the Capital Strategy, have been included. Any further major schemes associated with the strategy will be subject to future business cases and no financial provision is therefore contained within this strategy.
- 10.2. All capital expenditure will be subject to rigorous review to ensure that plans are affordable, prudent, and sustainable. The Strategy will be continually reviewed in light of emerging and changing local issues, circumstances and priorities and updated accordingly.

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Constabulary

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Reserves Strategy 2025-26



Cheshire
Police & Crime
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Introduction

Welcome to the 2025/26 Reserve Strategy.

Reserves are essentially savings accounts – they help manage financial risk and fund major future costs. As set out in the Strategy, we hold reserves for three main purposes:

- To cover unforeseen risks and expenditure that may be incurred outside of planned budgets – known as a general reserve
- To set-aside funds for specific purposes, known or predicted pressures or future liabilities – known as earmarked reserves
- To hold capital receipts from sale of assets. The use of which is restricted under legalisation to the purchase of new assets or the repayment of debt.

The Strategy needs to balance the necessity for reserves against the cost to council taxpayers and arrive at a level that is both prudent and adequate for the current climate but not excessive.

Details of each reserve and how it will be used is explained in the Strategy together with a list of the reserves and the amount held in each.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Roberts'.

**Chief Constable
Mark Roberts QPM**



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Price'.

**Police and Crime Commissioner
Dan Price**

RESERVE STRATEGY 2025/26

1. In addition to the requirements covering the robustness of estimates, Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 also requires the Chief Finance Officer, OPCC to present a report assessing the adequacy of the unallocated reserves in the context of policing threats and demands together with corporate and financial risks facing the organisation. The Commissioner needs to balance the necessity for reserves against the cost to council taxpayers and arrive at a level that is both prudent and adequate for the current climate but not excessive.
2. The Reserves Strategy sets out the reserves held, their intended usage and the strategy for ensuring the funds are maintained at an appropriate level.
Reserves are held for three main purposes:
 - a. To cover unforeseen risks and expenditure that may be incurred outside of planned budgets – known as a general reserve
 - b. To set-aside funds for specific purposes, known or predicted pressures or future liabilities – known as earmarked reserves
 - c. To hold capital receipts from sale of assets. The use of which is restricted under legislation to the purchase of new assets or the repayment of debt.
3. In addition to the above reserves, Cheshire Constabulary act as lead force for a number of regional collaborations for which it holds reserves. These reserves are owned by all regional partners on an agreed share basis in line with each collaboration agreement.
4. Over the past few years, the level of reserves held by all forces have been under scrutiny by the Home Office and it is now considered best practice to produce a reserve strategy covering the medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) period. The status of each reserve will be reported to Joint Management Board as part of the quarterly financial reports.
5. Based on the audited 2023/24 Statement of Accounts, £23.3m was held in reserves of which £1.9m belongs to the regional collaborations (of which Cheshire Constabulary is a partner and therefore part owner) and £2.7m was temporary funding carried forward. Annex 1 sets out the proposed usage of the reserves over the next four years in line with MTFS plans together with other known commitments and liabilities. Reserves are forecast to decrease to £15.1m by the end of March 2025 and then fall to £12.1m by March 2030 (including collaborations reserves of £1.8m and £1.3m respectively).

6. As part of the Home Office scrutiny process; it classifies reserves in three main categories:
 - a. Funding for planned expenditure on MTFS projects and programmes
 - b. Funding for specific projects and programmes beyond the current MTFS timeline
 - c. Those held as a general contingency or resource to meet other expenditure needs held in accordance with sound principles of good financial management.

Annex 2 provides analysis of the reserves in line with the above.

7. The purpose of each reserve is set out below:

General Reserves

The purpose of general reserves is to provide funding to cover specific and general risks identified in setting the budget but also in recognition of unforeseen risks and expenditure that may arise in year. Given the current levels of threats and demands facing policing the amount held in this reserve is deemed both prudent and adequate.

Basis of Transactions:

Best practice states that the prudent level for this reserve is 3% of the net revenue budget. Should the reserve fall below this level any underspends in the current financial year will be transferred up to the amount required to maintain the 3%. If such underspends are insufficient or not available, then a provision will be made in the next budget to cover any shortfall.

Use of this reserve is subject to approval by the Commissioner and is generally limited to funding unrecoverable overspends if they are not containable within existing funding and contingencies or other earmarked reserves.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Reserve

The origins of this reserve dates back to the start of the austerity programme and has been successfully used to support transition, implementation costs of transformational changes together with 'invest to save' projects. With increasing demands, the implementation of Digital Policing and the level of uncertainty over future funding, this reserve will provide some mitigation to these risks and challenges. This reserve also forms part of the 3% calculation as stated in the General Reserves above.

Basis of Transactions:

Any request for funding from this reserve will be subject to a business case setting out the proposal and the deliverable benefits, including wherever possible cashable savings. Such business cases will be presented to SCT Business Meeting for initial endorsement and then through Joint Management Board for approval from the Commissioner.

Earmarked Reserves:**Carry Forwards Reserve**

This is a temporary reserve for any underspend from the previous financial year that has been approved to be spent in the following financial year. For example, if a project is delayed funding can be carried forward into the following year to meet delayed spend.

Basis of Transactions:

As all carry forward items are approved through the quarterly budget reports submitted to Joint Management Board via SCT Business Meeting, the funding is automatically returned to the relevant department at the start of the following financial year.

Proceeds of Crime Community Fund Reserve

Money seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) 2002 are managed through a process called ARIS – Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme. As part of this scheme, all agencies involved with the seizures receive a share of the funds. These are held in this reserve.

Basis of Transactions:

The first call on monies seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) will be the funding of Economic Crime Unit (ECU) financial investigators and Legal Services costs of managing subsequent court proceedings to recover POCA. The contribution towards ECU was originally agreed as part of the 2022/23 budget to meet the cost of up to four investigators and the associated legal costs. This will increase annually at the same level as the police staff pay award. This reflects the intention and commitment to further drive-up performance on asset recovery.

The second call will remain as the Commissioner's Community Fund (SWAP Fund). A contribution of £200,000 was agreed for 2024/25 and this level is carried forward to future years. This reflects the commitment to community projects.

Existing funding commitments will be maintained in line with the previously agreed business case. Any additional funding will be placed in the POCA reserve. It will primarily be used to fund projects and activity to the benefit of communities affected by crime in line with the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan. Agreement on its usage will be through a management decision made by the Commissioner. Any bids to utilise POCA funding will require a business case to be submitted to the Commissioner which clearly shows how the proposal will benefit those communities affected by crime. Usage of the totality of the POCA monies remain at the discretion of the Commissioner as the recipient of funding.

Hardship Loan Reserve

It is acknowledged that individuals may find themselves needing assistance in achieving a greater sense of wellbeing; it is known that wellbeing comprises elements of physical, emotional, social and financial health. As such, a scheme was created to address any short-term financial issues personnel (Officers and Staff) may experience. The intent being to prevent/break the cycle of financial difficulty without the exposure to high interest loan schemes (pay day loans). This small reserve covers the loans until repaid.

Basis of Transactions:

Should a default arise on the repayment of any Hardship Loan, a report will be submitted to Deputy Chief Constable. If they approve the debt can be written off, the funding will be applied and reported to the Commissioner in the next quarterly financial report.

Pay and Pensions Reserve

There are currently several issues in relation to pay and pensions that could impact on the revenue funding, the main being the outcome of the McCloud ruling (see financial risks below). The level of administration to service these is considerable and the uncertainty of how these will be funded has resulted in this reserve being created to cover any initial costs. It is anticipated that this will be utilised once the funding position is clarified and to support the preparatory work. Initial costs are now known which will significantly reduce the reserve. Further costs are still expected, and funding will need to be set aside for this purpose.

Basis of Transactions:

Utilisation of this funding is linked to the costs and support required in both HR and Finance in resolving the McCloud issues. Approval is granted each year as part of the budget setting process. Additional use in year will be reported in the quarterly financial reports to Joint Management Board.

Redundancy Reserve

It is recognised that the cost of reforms, efficiencies and restructuring can require changes to staffing levels. This reserve is held to meet any associated costs should the need arise.

Basis of Transactions:

Redundancies are managed through the relevant HR processes and approval routes. Only approved redundancies will be funded via this reserve and will be reported in the quarterly financial reports to Joint Management Board.

Major Investigations Reserve

This reserve holds funds to contribute towards the costs of ongoing Major Investigations in accordance with the terms and conditions of any grants.

Basis of Transactions:

This is restricted under the grant agreement to fund the specified operation and is reported accordingly.

Council Tax Deficit Reserve

This reserve holds funds received from Government towards irrecoverable Council Tax income losses associated with the coronavirus pandemic. It is held to mitigate against future resulting Council Tax Collection Fund deficits as they are declared by billing authorities.

Basis of Transactions:

This reserve will be applied to council tax collection fund deficits until such times that the deficits have ceased, or the grant is fully utilised. Should the collection funds return to balanced or surplus before the grant is fully utilised, any balance will be transferred to general reserves.

Estates Strategy Reserve

Funding was set aside to support the Estates Strategy including the Headquarters PFI expiry work due to the contract ending in 2033/34.

Basis of Transactions:

Approval for the use of this funding is reserved to the Commissioner and restricted to supporting the delivery of the Estates Strategy. Any call on this reserve is subject to a report to Joint Management Board and Commissioner approval.

Road Safety Initiatives Reserve

This reserve holds funds set aside to enable the commissioning of projects incorporating road safety initiatives including the deployment of average speed cameras and other operational road safety measures.

Basis of Transactions:

Use of this funding is subject to a report to Joint Management Board setting out the proposals and is subject to agreement from the Commissioner and Chief Constable.

Commissioning Reserve

The Commissioner bids for and receives specific grants and funding to support victims and other key priorities such as Violence against Women and Girls. Some of these projects cover more than one financial year and this reserve is used to hold such funding until it is utilised.

Basis of Transactions:

Use of this funding is at the discretion of the Commissioning Officer within the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner in consultation with the Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer.

Capital Receipts

Capital Receipts represents the net proceeds from the sale of assets. Use of this funding is limited by regulation to re-investment in new assets or the repayment of debt.

Basis of Transactions:

The use of this reserve is restricted under legislation and regulations and is applied to the IT refresh programme at part of the year-end process.

Unapplied Capital Grants Reserve

This reserve contains any capital grant received by the Commissioner but not yet used to finance capital investment. Such funding, if any is allocated, is now generally applied in full in the year it is received, with the exception of specific grants that are applied when the associated expenditure is made.

Basis of Transactions:

The use of this reserve is restricted under the grant arrangements and is applied to the capital programme at part of the year-end process.

Emergency Services Network (ESN) Reserve

The Emergency Services Network (ESN) programme will see the current Airwave based communication systems replaced with a new 4G based communication service. This is a national programme that is currently undergoing a new procurement process, which is expected to take some time to complete. Airwave now remains viable to at least 2035 and therefore, this reserve is not expected to be required for the foreseeable future.

Basis of Transactions:

Within the reserve, grant funding is held for use in line with the terms and conditions of the grant. Until such times as a clearer national position is available no further funding will be added to this reserve.

HQ IT Reserve

This reserve was created as part of the private finance initiative (PFI) scheme to support the replacement of computer equipment. It is supplemented each year in line with the scheme's requirement and applied to finance relevant capital expenditure.

Basis of Transactions:

The use of this reserve is restricted under the PFI contract arrangements and is applied to the IT refresh programme at part of the year-end process.

Revenue Reserve for Capital

In recognition of the removal of Government funding for capital investments, the MTFS includes a contribution each year towards the costs of such investment in order to mitigate the level of borrowing required. This contribution will be held in this reserve and applied as capital spend is incurred. This reserve is for the general funding of capital, especially those annual replacement schemes such as Fleet and Digital Technology.

Basis of Transactions:

This reserve supports the funding of the approved capital programme. Its use is initially set out at the start of the financial year through the Investment Strategy and reported on throughout the year as part of the quarterly financial reports. Final actual application of the reserve is undertaken at year-end and reported in the outturn report.

Collaboration Reserves:

Armed Police Alliance

This reserve has arisen from underspends in previous financial years due to high turnover of officers. It is being utilised to support training, ammunition and other expenditure to support the training of new trainees to replace these officers.

Underwater Search Unit

Funding held on behalf of all partners for future demands – e.g., replacement of the boat, vehicles, and equipment as part of an asset replacement strategy.

Local Resilience Forum

Cheshire Resilience Forum partners work together to prepare for emergencies, including Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Services and local authorities. The reserve is held to support strategic training and as a contingency for unforeseen pressures.

National Blue Light Procurement Reserve

This is a national collaboration, which Cheshire Constabulary leads, with the reserve being held for development of the system in conjunction with the Home Office.

For all Collaboration Reserves – Basis of Transactions:

The use of any of the above reserves are subject to approval by all relevant partners and the agreed governance routes as set out in the S.22 Agreements.

KEY RISKS

8. There are a number of uncertainties and risks over the next few years that hold the potential of significant financial impact including the on-going effect of the coronavirus pandemic. Uncertainty over funding as a result makes planning difficult and reserves are a key tool in providing flexibility to deal with this challenge.
9. The following set out key financial risks that may impact on reserves:
 - a. Government funding is still uncertain in the medium-term although a Spending Review is due in 2025. As a result, the MTFS remains challenging with many uncertainties in an unsettled economic environment. Reserves will be required to support the budget and savings targets.

- b. Claims of unlawful discrimination were made in relation to the changes to the Judiciary and Firefighters Pension regulations and in December 2018 the Court of Appeal (McCloud / Sargeant) ruled that the 'transitional protection' offered to some members as part of the reform to public sector pensions amounts to unlawful discrimination. Significant work is required to facilitate the fallout of this ruling and there is a degree of uncertainty over the costs and funding going forward. Initial costings are now known, and the Pay and Pensions reserve utilised to fund these. However, there are further costs expected including 'compensation'. The value of these and their ultimate funding remains uncertain.

FORWARD STRATEGY

- 10. The foremost principle of holding reserves remains affordability versus risk. To set aside reserves for all potential risks scenarios that may arise would be prohibitively expensive and result in demands on council taxpayers considerably higher than likely need.
- 11. As such, the strategy for general reserves is to hold the level of this reserve at around 3% of the net budget requirement. The level should be reviewed annually after the budget for the forthcoming year has been set. Any excess will be released in support of capital funding to limit the need to borrow and the associated impact on revenue budgets. Any shortfall will be recognised as a first call on any in-year underspends or built into the following year's budget proposals.
- 12. Earmarked reserves are reviewed quarterly and reported to the Commissioner as part of the formal financial reviews. The reviews will take into account the purpose of the reserve, the risks they are designed to mitigate and the current and future demands. Any reserve deemed no longer required will be returned to general reserves.
- 13. Strategic risks are monitored through SCT Business Meeting, Joint Management Board and Joint Audit Advisory Committee. Any new risk or significant change to existing risks will be monitored with any impact on reserves presented to SCT Business Meeting for recommendation to the Commissioner for the creation or adjustment to Earmarked Reserves.
- 14. Capital reserves are the primary source of funding for all capital investments and are therefore linked to the approved capital strategy. The use of such reserves is designed to cover short-life assets, limiting the need to borrow over short periods.

15. Capital receipts of more than £10,000 from the sale of assets can only be used to fund future capital investment or the repayment of debt. Receipts of less than £10,000 are returned to revenue budget.
16. General capital grants have not been allocated for a number of years, it is, therefore, appropriate to forward plan on that basis. In order to meet the minimum asset replacement cycles, a revenue contribution is made each year into Revenue Reserve for Capital reserve and used towards financing that year's capital programme.

	2024/25	2025/26			2026/27			2027/28			2028/29			2029/30		
	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	31-Mar £000
<u>General Reserves: Revenue</u>																
Police Fund - General Reserve	£5,773	£0	£0	£5,773	£0	£0	£5,773	£0	£0	£5,773	£0	£0	£5,773	£0	£0	£5,773
MTFS Reserve	£2,483	£0	£0	£2,483	£0	£0	£2,483	£0	£0	£2,483	£0	£0	£2,483	£0	£0	£2,483
	£8,256	£0	£0	£8,256	£0	£0	£8,256	£0	£0	£8,256	£0	£0	£8,256	£0	£0	£8,256
<u>Earmarked Reserves: Revenue</u>																
Carry Forwards Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
POCA Reserve	£560	-£147	£0	£413	-£18	£0	£395	-£18	£0	£377	£0	£0	£377	£0	£0	£377
Hardship Loan Reserve	£50	£0	£0	£50	£0	£0	£50	£0	£0	£50	£0	£0	£50	£0	£0	£50
Pay and Pensions Reserve	£147	-£128	£0	£19	£0	£0	£19	£0	£0	£19	£0	£0	£19	£0	£0	£19
Redundancy Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Major Investigations Reserve	£1,125	-£562	£0	£562	-£562	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Council Tax Deficit Reserve	£769	£0	£0	£769	£0	£0	£769	£0	£0	£769	£0	£0	£769	£0	£0	£769
Estates Strategy Reserve	£500	-£500	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Road Safety Initiatives Reserve	£342	£0	£0	£342	£0	£0	£342	£0	£0	£342	£0	£0	£342	£0	£0	£342
Commissioning Reserve	£219	-£219	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
IT Reserve	£291	£0	£0	£291	£0	£0	£291	£0	£0	£291	£0	£0	£291	£0	£0	£291
	£4,003	-£1,556	£0	£2,446	-£580	£0	£1,866	-£18	£0	£1,848	£0	£0	£1,848	£0	£0	£1,848
<u>Earmarked Reserves: Capital</u>																
Capital Receipts	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Capital Reserve - Unapplied Grant	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
ESN Reserve	£226	£0	£0	£226	£0	£0	£226	£0	£0	£226	£0	£0	£226	£0	£0	£226
HQ IT Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Revenue Reserve for Capital	£755	£3,747	-£4,502	£0	£3,551	-£3,551	£0	£3,478	-£3,478	£0	£4,631	-£4,631	£0	£5,020	-£4,546	£474
	£981	£3,747	-£4,502	£226	£3,551	-£3,551	£226	£3,478	-£3,478	£226	£4,631	-£4,631	£226	£5,020	-£4,546	£700
<u>Collaboration Reserves:</u>																
Armed Police Alliance Reserve	£452	-£422	£0	£29	£0	£0	£29	£0	£0	£29	£0	£0	£29	£0	£0	£29
Dog Alliance Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Local Resilience Forum Reserve	£353	£0	£0	£353	£0	£0	£353	£0	£0	£353	£0	£0	£353	£0	£0	£353
MFSS Development Fund	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
National Blue Light Procurement	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
UWSU Reserve	£1,011	£0	-£80	£931	£0	£0	£931	£0	£0	£931	£0	£0	£931	£0	£0	£931
NWAP Collaboration	£30	£0	£0	£30	£0	£0	£30	£0	£0	£30	£0	£0	£30	£0	£0	£30
	£1,846	-£422	-£80	£1,343	£0	£0	£1,343	£0	£0	£1,343	£0	£0	£1,343	£0	£0	£1,343
TOTAL RESERVES	£15,086	£1,769	-£4,582	£12,271	£2,971	-£3,551	£11,691	£3,460	-£3,478	£11,673	£4,631	-£4,631	£11,673	£5,020	-£4,546	£12,147

RESERVES HELD - Home Office classification

	2024/25			2025/26			2026/27			2027/28			2028/29			2029/30		
	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	31-Mar £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000
General Reserve / Contingency:																		
Police Fund - General Reserve	£5,773	£0	£0	£5,773	£0	£0	£5,773	£0	£0	£5,773	£0	£0	£5,773	£0	£0	£5,773	£0	£0
MTFS Reserve	£2,483	£0	£0	£2,483	£0	£0	£2,483	£0	£0	£2,483	£0	£0	£2,483	£0	£0	£2,483	£0	£0
	£8,256	£0	£0	£8,256	£0	£0	£8,256	£0	£0	£8,256	£0	£0	£8,256	£0	£0	£8,256	£0	£0
Funding for Projects/Programmes - current MTFS																		
Armed Police Alliance Reserve	£452	-£422	£0	£29	£0	£0	£29	£0	£0	£29	£0	£0	£29	£0	£0	£29	£0	£0
Capital Receipts	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Capital Reserve - Unapplied Grant	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Carry Forwards Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Dog Alliance Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
ESN Reserve	£226	£0	£0	£226	£0	£0	£226	£0	£0	£226	£0	£0	£226	£0	£0	£226	£0	£0
POCA Reserve	£560	-£147	£0	£413	-£18	£0	£395	-£18	£0	£377	£0	£0	£377	£0	£0	£377	£0	£0
Hardship Loan Reserve	£50	£0	£0	£50	£0	£0	£50	£0	£0	£50	£0	£0	£50	£0	£0	£50	£0	£0
Pay and Pensions Reserve	£147	-£128	£0	£19	£0	£0	£19	£0	£0	£19	£0	£0	£19	£0	£0	£19	£0	£0
HQ IT Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
IT Reserve	£291	£0	£0	£291	£0	£0	£291	£0	£0	£291	£0	£0	£291	£0	£0	£291	£0	£0
Local Resilience Forum Reserve	£353	£0	£0	£353	£0	£0	£353	£0	£0	£353	£0	£0	£353	£0	£0	£353	£0	£0
MFSS Development Fund	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
National Blue Light Procurement	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Redundancy Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Revenue Reserve for Capital	£755	£3,747	-£4,502	£0	£3,551	-£3,551	£0	£3,478	-£3,478	£0	£4,631	-£4,631	£0	£5,020	-£4,546	£474		
UWSU Reserve	£1,011	£0	-£80	£931	£0	£0	£931	£0	£0	£931	£0	£0	£931	£0	£0	£931	£0	£0
Major Investigations Reserve	£1,125	-£562	£0	£562	-£562	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
NWAP Collaboration	£30	£0	£0	£30	£0	£0	£30	£0	£0	£30	£0	£0	£30	£0	£0	£30	£0	£0
Council Tax Deficit Reserve	£769	£0	£0	£769	£0	£0	£769	£0	£0	£769	£0	£0	£769	£0	£0	£769	£0	£0
Estates Strategy Reserve	£500	-£500	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Road Safety Initiatives Reserve	£342	£0	£0	£342	£0	£0	£342	£0	£0	£342	£0	£0	£342	£0	£0	£342	£0	£0
Commissioning Reserve	£219	-£219	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
	£6,830	£1,769	-£4,582	£4,015	£2,971	-£3,551	£3,435	£3,460	-£3,478	£3,417	£4,631	-£4,631	£3,417	£5,020	-£4,546	£3,891		
TOTAL RESERVES	£15,086	£1,769	-£4,582	£12,271	£2,971	-£3,551	£11,691	£3,460	-£3,478	£11,673	£4,631	-£4,631	£11,673	£5,020	-£4,546	£12,147		

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Cheshire Police and Crime Panel

Date of meeting: 7th February 2025

Report of: Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services, Cheshire East Council

Subject: Consideration of the Commissioner's Draft Police and Crime Plan

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 This report invites the Panel to question the Police and Crime Commissioner on his draft Police and Crime Plan and following discussion with the Commissioner make recommendations on the detail of the Plan.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Panel is recommended to:
- (i) Review the draft Police and Crime Plan.
 - (ii) Ask the Police and Crime Commissioner such questions about the Police and Crime Plan as the members of the Panel think appropriate; and
 - (iii) Make a report or recommendations on the draft Police and Crime Plan to the Commissioner.

3. Background

- 3.1 Section 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 requires the Police and Crime Commissioner for a police area to issue a Police and Crime Plan within the financial year in which he or she is elected. The Plan should include:
- (i) The PCC's police and crime objectives;
 - (i) The policing the chief constable is to provide;
 - (ii) The financial and other resources the PCC will make available to the chief constable to provide policing;
 - (iii) How the chief constable will report to the PCC about policing; and

(iv) How the chief constable's performance will be measured.

- 3.2 Police and Crime Panels have a statutory duty under Section 28(3) of the legislation to review and comment on the Police and Crime Plan and therefore should be able to identify how they will approach scrutiny over the coming years.
- 3.3 At an informal meeting with the Commissioner on 20th December 2024 the Panel was briefed on the themes that would be included in the Police and Crime Plan, and were given the opportunity to ask the Commissioner questions.
- 3.4 In accordance with the relevant legislation, the Commissioner has now formally submitted a draft Plan for consideration by the Panel, this is attached as Appendix I.
- 3.5 The LGA guidance document "Good Practice for Police and Crime Panels" is attached to this report as Appendix II, attention is drawn to pages 12 to 14, which refer to reviewing a Police and Crime Plan.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications for the Panel.

5. Equality Implications

- 5.1 There are no equality implications.

6. Legal implications.

- 6.1 Under Section 6 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, Panels have a broad power to review or scrutinise decisions made by the Commissioner in discharge of his functions. This means that the Panel has a statutory obligation to review and scrutinise all of the areas where the Commissioner may be planning to develop policy and also new areas of delivery.

7. Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:-

Name:	Martin Smith
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Police & Crime Plan

2024-28

*Your voice for a
safer Cheshire*



Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

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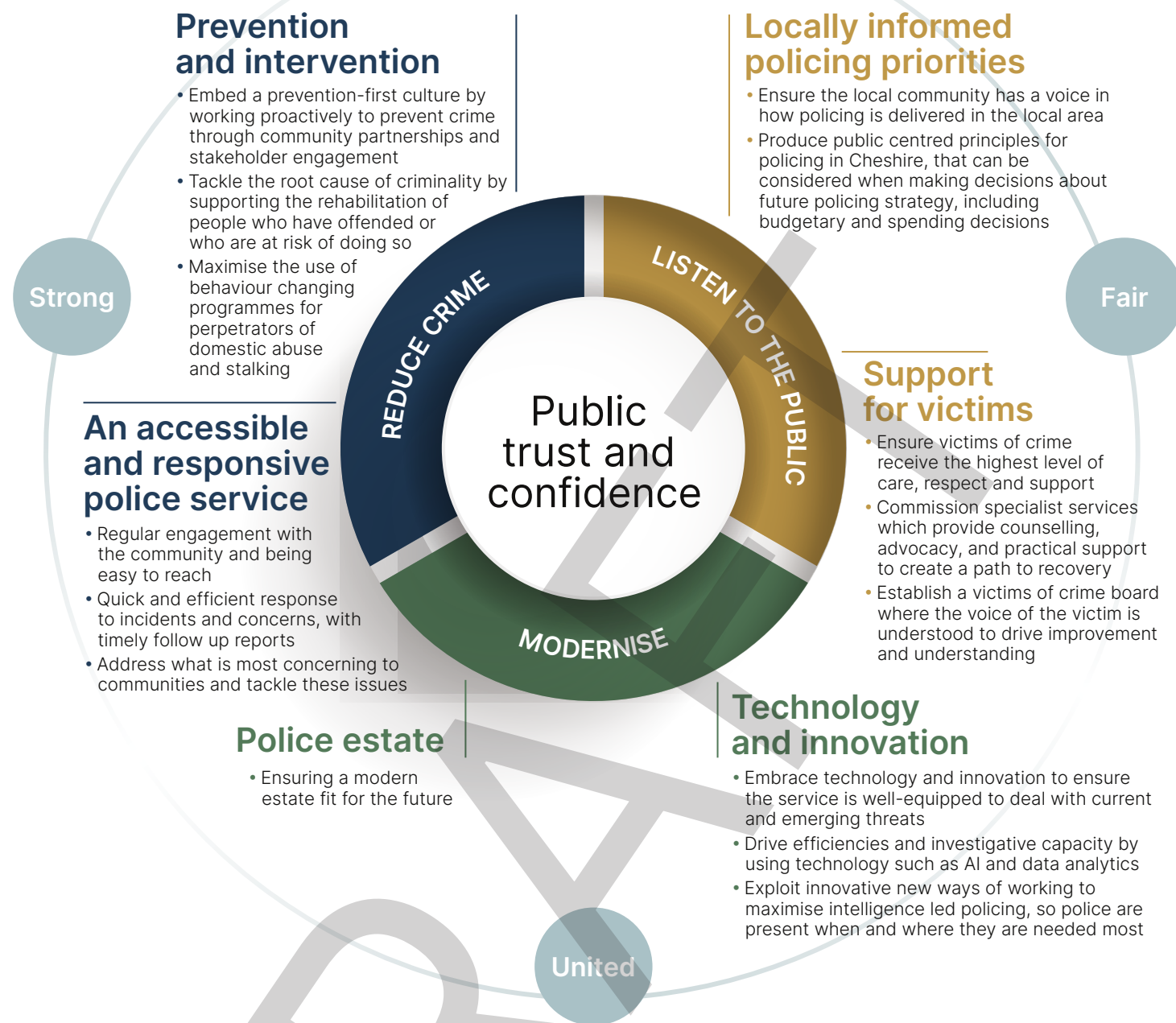


Foreword
from the Police and
Crime Commissioner

When I was elected as Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), I pledged to ensure every person in Cheshire felt safe, valued and confident that when a crime is committed, justice will be served. I have lived in Cheshire all my life and after nearly a decade of being a councillor, I know the area and its people. I see the challenges they face daily and know what is needed to feel safe.

A great deal of work has gone into developing this plan, to ensure it reflects a wide range of views as possible on issues that are important to people. Supported by my deputies, I have listened to the public from all corners of the county. People from a diverse selection of backgrounds, as well as business owners, community leaders and partners.

“I am very proud to be your voice in policing.”



What I have heard since being elected is a lot of praise for our police officers, staff, and volunteers. I know people also want more police engagement in our communities, to understand those crimes and issues that are important to people where they live. The public need confidence in knowing when a crime is reported, the service will be accessible and responsive and there is support available.

I have ensured the public's priorities are represented under three key pillars:

- Listen to the public
- Modernise
- Reduce crime

I am in a unique position to bring together a broad range of partners, including local authorities, MPs, community groups, businesses and residents. By fostering strong partnerships, we can address the root causes of crime and anti-social behaviour to create a safer, more cohesive community through prevention and intervention. Effective collaboration is key to tackling the complex issues we face. By working together, we can share resources, expertise and information to develop innovative solutions that meet the unique needs of our community.

I am dedicated to ensuring that every voice is heard. I will keep the conversation alive so that communities receive a policing service they expect and deserve and will work collectively to build a better, safer Cheshire for all.

Dan Price
Dan Price
CHESHIRE POLICE AND
CRIME COMMISSIONER

Cheshire is a safe county and together with the officers and staff of the Constabulary I am determined to make it even safer. Since I returned to the force in 2021, we have grown in strength by 330 officers which has enabled us to answer your calls quicker, respond to emergencies faster and take positive action with crime down and arrests up by 40%.



Chief Constable's
Comment

We continue to make Cheshire a hostile environment for criminals whether they live here or travel on our extensive transport network, so that you can get on with your education, work, family or social life in safety and with confidence.

My role is to take the Police and Crime Plan, the Government's Strategic Policing Requirement, national policing measures and policy, and recommendations from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and translate that into clear tactical direction for our officers and staff. The recent Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) Inspection by HMICFRS is a testament to the fact that we are one of the best performing forces in the country - we are not complacent and we will always strive to improve.

Every aspect of policing is important but we will continue to prioritise the protection of the most vulnerable in our community. Crime continues to evolve and we have seen welcome reductions in acquisitive crime such as burglary and vehicle offences (-15% since 2021) and in line with the national picture more people are coming forward to report sexual offences, whilst our proactive work continues to tackle the vile and growing scourge of the online abuse of children.

We continually work to ensure we deploy our resources in the most effective manner possible to reflect the volume and complexity of that demand. But the bedrock of policing in Cheshire will always be our neighbourhood teams providing the vital link to local communities.

Our ambition is to build on our strengths and be outstanding in every aspect of the service we provide to the public of Cheshire.

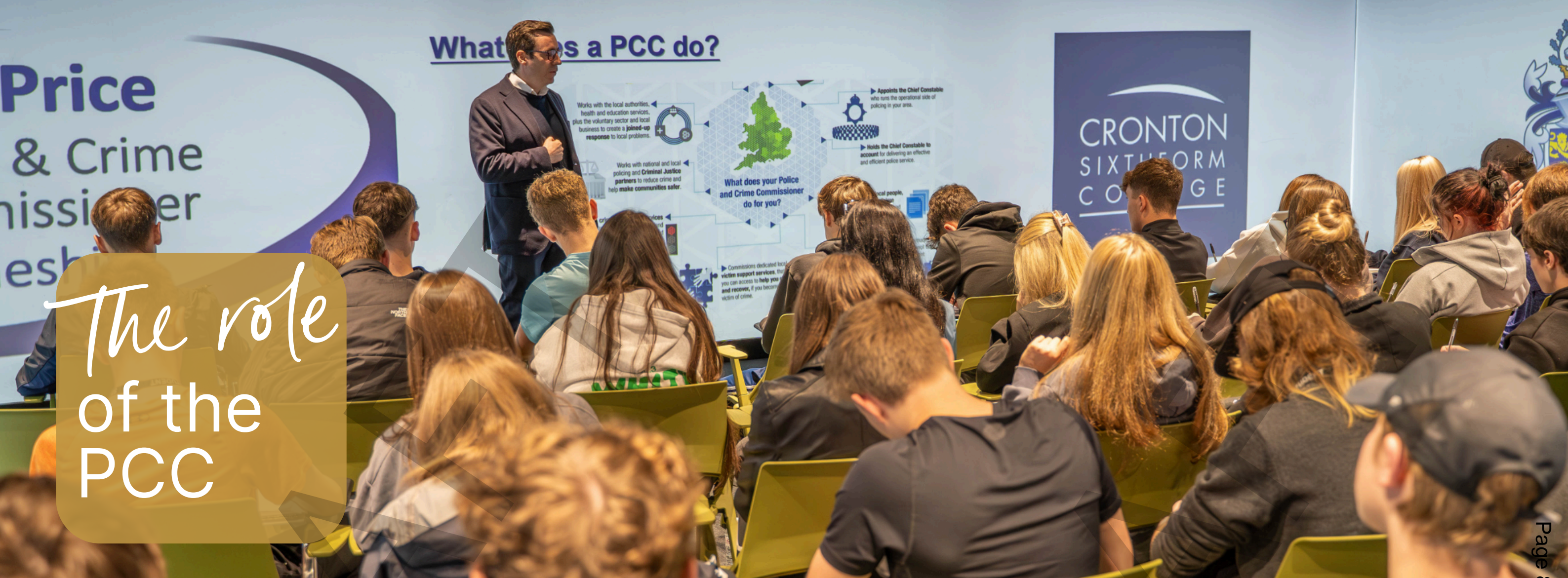
Mark Roberts, QPM
CHIEF CONSTABLE



Cheshire
Constabulary

Our plan on a page





The role of the PCC

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility (PRSR) Act 2011 created the posts of elected Police and Crime Commissioners for all territorial police forces in England and Wales.

I am responsible for the **totality of policing in Cheshire** and I am elected to represent **everyone in Cheshire**.

During my term of office, I will carry out my duties to ensure the people of Cheshire have an efficient and effective police service. I will do this by:

- Setting the strategic direction for policing in Cheshire through this Police and Crime Plan
- Holding the Chief Constable to account on behalf of the people of Cheshire
- Setting the force budget and policing precept and ensuring the force delivers value for money
- Monitoring the performance of the force and publishing this information for Cheshire residents
- Commissioning services for victims of crime
- Funding services which prevent and reduce crime
- Maintaining and modernising the police estate
- Working with partners to enhance the delivery of the criminal justice services
- Monitoring and reviewing complaints made against officers and staff, whilst having direct responsibility for complaints made against the Chief Constable
- Appointing and where necessary, dismissing the Chief Constable

The role of the Chief Constable

The Chief Constable is operationally independent of my role and their key duties are described below:

- Responsible for day-to-day operational policing
- Directing and controlling the officers and staff of Cheshire Constabulary
- Maintaining the King's Peace
- Keeping the communities of Cheshire safe
- Delivering the Police and Crime Plan
- Personally setting and promoting high standards of professional conduct
- Leading by example to create and uphold a quality service for local people

The role of the Police and Crime Panel

The role of the Panel is to scrutinise, challenge and support me in the effective exercise of my functions. The roles and responsibilities of the Police and Crime Panel are set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The Panel is made up of 10 councillors from the four local authorities in the area, plus three independent co-opted members. It reflects the political representation in the area and has a geographical balance.

The Panel scrutinises the work of the PCC by:

- Reviewing the Police and Crime Plan and annual report
- Scrutinising (and potentially vetoing) the proposed council tax precept for policing
- Holding confirmation hearings for the PCC's proposed appointments of a Chief Constable, Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer (and Deputy PCC where applicable). The Panel may also veto the Chief Constable appointment. It also scrutinises the actions and decisions of the PCC as well as considering complaints against the PCC that are not criminal in nature

Partners are key to delivering my plan

Police and crime issues often require collaboration beyond the scope of policing alone. In this plan, I am dedicated to working closely with partners who share statutory responsibilities, including those in criminal justice, local authorities, health and education sectors.

Additionally, I recognise the valuable services provided by the voluntary community and social enterprise sectors and I will work in partnership with these organisations.

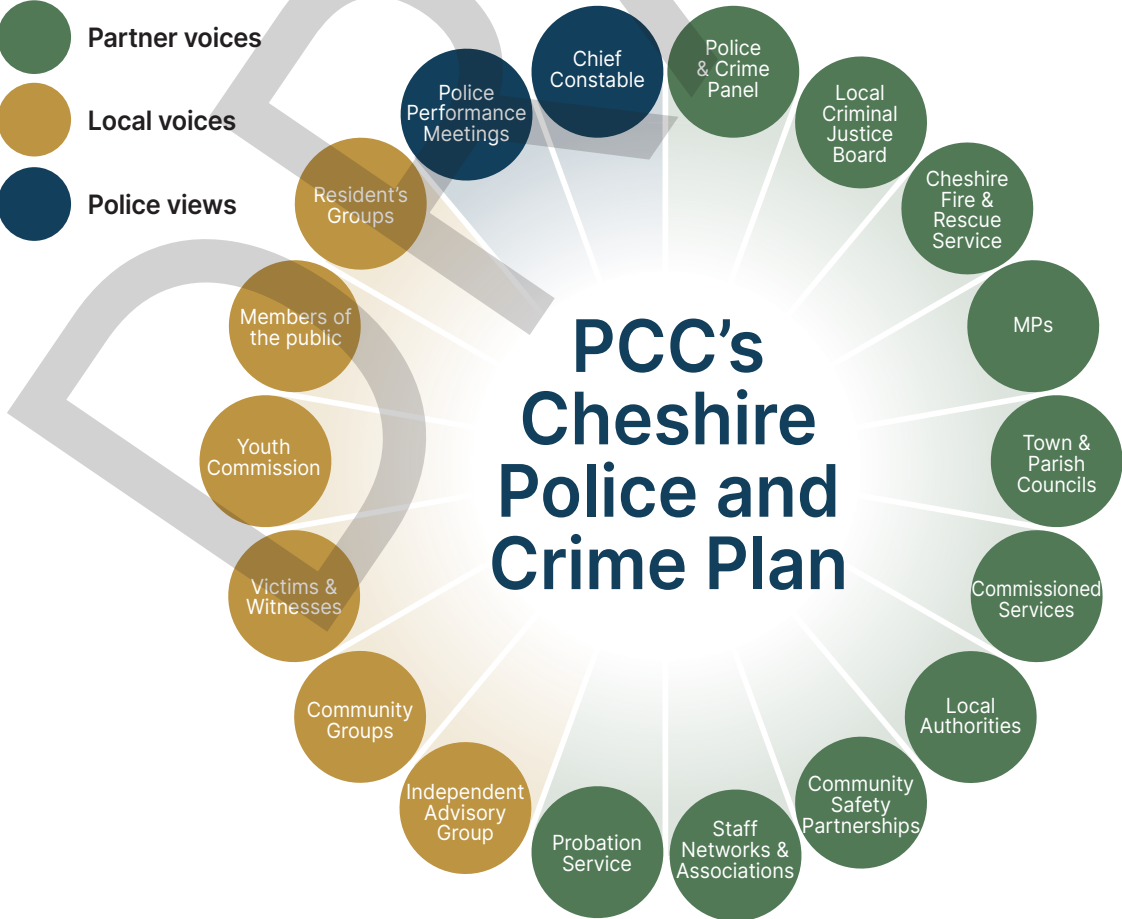
I will actively seek opportunities to align funding and jointly commission services to address relevant local priorities. While some policing issues are national, I am committed to addressing the unique needs and challenges of specific local communities and ensuring that our strategic priorities are aligned with those of our partners.

I will work closely with PCCs across the North West to provide rigorous oversight of the work being undertaken by the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU). The Unit provides an invaluable service across Cheshire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cumbria and North Wales to identify, disrupt and dismantle organised crime causing the most harm

across the region. The unit is made up of officers and staff from across the region's six forces. I, together with my PCC colleagues, will robustly scrutinise the operation of the unit, as well as how it is performing against its budget, to best ensure that it serves the region most effectively.

Horizon scanning

The policing landscape is always changing and we must adapt to address societal issues. I am in a strong position to understand and manage emerging trends and threats. This is through my collaboration with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and the Chief Constable's connections with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) together with our joint efforts with the Home Office and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).



Policing Protocol Order 2023:

What you need to know

Who it applies to



Purpose

This document explains how key partners in policing in England and Wales should work together to ensure effective policing.

Key points

- Roles and relationships:** The Protocol sets out how these groups should interact to maintain good working relationships.
- Independence:** Chief Constables oversee day-to-day police operations. Whilst working with the PCC to help him/her deliver the aspirations contained in this plan, operational matters remain under the direction of the Chief Constable without political interference.
- Accountability:** PCCs are elected officials who oversee the police on behalf of the public. They set goals and priorities for the police and are accountable to the voters.
- Funding:** PCCs set the budget and long-term spending plans for policing, working closely with the Chief Constable to ensure those funds are spent as budgeted and any funding challenges are addressed appropriately.
- Police and Crime Panels:** These panels support and scrutinise the work of PCCs. They ensure that PCCs are effectively holding the police to account and represent the interests of the public.
- Standards:** Everyone must follow high standards of behaviour, including honesty, integrity and accountability.
- Goal:** The aim is to ensure that all parties understand and respect each other's roles, leading to better policing services for the community.

Complaints

The Police and Crime Commissioner takes all complaints seriously. One of the most important functions of the police complaints system is to support individuals, police forces and the police service to reflect on and learn from complaints and incidents. The police complaints system provides a vital source of evidence to help the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable drive improvements in policing.

Cheshire *at a glance*

Cheshire is a diverse county of rural landscapes home to a large farming population. Sitting alongside urban areas characterised by successful businesses, heavy industry, a thriving night time economy and vibrant local communities.

Situated in the North West of England, Cheshire spreads over a geographical area covering 919 square miles with a population of just over one million which is expected to continue growing. The county is larger in area than Greater Manchester and Merseyside combined.

Cheshire has excellent connectivity by rail and by road with the M6, M53, M56 and M62 motorways and good proximity and access to airports. The county consists of four unitary authorities: Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington.

Cheshire's population continues to age with older people making up an increasing proportion of population where one-fifth (20.3%) in 2021 were aged 65 years and over which is just slightly above the national average (18.6%). Just over one-sixth (16.35%) were aged under 15 years (where national average for this age group is 17.4%).

In 2021 just slightly over 91% of Cheshire residents identified their ethnic group within the high-level "White" category (as per Census 2021 categorisation - White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British and White: Irish). National average is 81.7% and this would indicate that Cheshire is not as ethnically diverse as other areas of England and Wales. There are diverse communities across Cheshire from all backgrounds and it is important that their policing and support service needs are met.

While Cheshire is a largely affluent area, there are also pockets of deprivation across the county. By understanding local needs through greater partnership working, we can develop better support services, including commissioned services. I will strive to achieve improvements which align with community priorities.

Cheshire is recognised by not only its rich and valuable historic heritage but also as a county where large-scale events such as Creamfields, Nantwich Jazz, Blues and Music Festival, Neighbourhood Weekender, Royal County Cheshire Show and Chester races are held.



Developing your plan

As your elected representative for policing, victims and crime, I'm dedicated to understanding your needs and expectations to make our communities safer. Your views have been integral in developing this plan. This has been through face-to-face conversations with residents, partners and other stakeholders, correspondence into my office or via my Plan on a Page consultation survey, plus participation in citizens' assemblies.

There are benefits to taking time in publishing a plan. I prioritised an intensive period of engagement to develop overarching pillars and priorities. It has always been my intention to reach as many people as possible to ensure the key elements of the plan truly reflect your needs. I would like to thank everyone who also took the time to give their feedback on my 'Plan on a page' that was circulated widely in advance of publishing this full Plan.

Public trust and confidence

My promise to you:

- To conduct citizens' assemblies to build trust and confidence by involving every day, local people in the decision-making process on important issues, helping set priorities in each of our nine local policing units
- To identify the strengths and areas for improvement in the workforce by commissioning a culture and attitudes assessment

Public trust and confidence is the foundation of this Police and Crime Plan and it is built on the principle that community cooperation is vital to policing. By prioritising transparency and accountability, I will build confidence by involving every day, local people in community engagement, we will foster an improved sense of safety and security with the public.

A trusted and respected police service is better equipped to prevent crime, support victims and create

a safer environment for everyone. I will ensure this is the foundation of all we do. When police officers and staff are representative of and involved in communities, they gain a better understanding of the unique challenges and concerns that residents face. This insight allows them to tailor their approach to policing, ensuring it is more effective and responsive to local needs and helps to build strong relationships and mutual respect.

Workforce

People working for Cheshire Constabulary are our greatest asset. With approximately 4,000 staff, from police officers, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), police staff and volunteers, everyone plays a vital role in keeping Cheshire safe. In addition to this, there is the invaluable

contribution made by the Special Constabulary. The Police Uplift Programme increased investment to the frontline, allowing the recruitment of an additional 330 officers by March 2025. With changing demands in policing and on the Constabulary, the neighbourhood policing model provides the framework by which performance is managed.

Police Race Action Plan

Cheshire Constabulary is fully committed to embedding the aims of the National Police Race Action Plan through its Race Action Plan for Cheshire, with strategic commitments to:

- Be an anti-racist police force
- Strengthen public confidence and trust in our ethnic communities
- Have an inclusive and supported workforce which represents Cheshire's communities

Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics provides guidance on ethical and professional behaviour for everyone in policing. This is what the public has a right to expect and what the Constabulary expects from its employees. It contains advice on areas of policing that are important to maintain public trust and legitimacy in order to help the Constabulary do the right thing.

The Constabulary is committed to the highest standards of behaviour and uses the ethical policing principles to make and reflect on its professional decisions.

As policing professionals, it commits to the following.

- **Courage** – making, communicating and being accountable for decisions and standing against anything that could bring its profession into disrepute
- **Respect and empathy** – encouraging, listening to and understanding the views of others and seeking to recognise and respond to the physical, mental and emotional challenges that it and other people may face
- **Public service** – working in the public interest, fostering public trust and confidence and taking pride in providing an excellent service to the public

The Average Day for Cheshire Police



All the above information based on an average day in the 2023-24 calendar year.



HMICFRS

The outcomes of the HMICFRS PEEL inspection will be included in the plan. Publication is due early Feb 2025.

Listen to the public

Ensuring the local community has a voice in how policing is delivered is essential.

By focussing on what matters most to local people, not only can we build trust and cooperation but make policing more effective. It enables priorities to be tailored to the unique needs and concerns of the area, fostering a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone.

Citizens' assemblies ensure local voices are heard by bringing together a diverse group of community members. This includes those with high levels of trust in policing, as well as those with none, to discuss and deliberate on important issues. These assemblies are designed to be representative of the broader community, ensuring that a wide range of perspectives and experiences are included. Through structured sessions, participants receive information, engage in discussions and collaborate to develop recommendations. This process empowers people to have a direct impact on decision-making, ensuring that policies and initiatives reflect the real needs and priorities of the community.

This is important because it enhances democratic participation and legitimacy. When local voices are actively involved in shaping policies, it fosters greater trust and confidence in public institutions. It also ensures that decisions are made with a deeper understanding of the community's concerns and values. By valuing and incorporating local input, citizens' assemblies help build a more inclusive, responsive and resilient society.



Locally informed policing priorities

My promise to you:

- To ensure the local community has a voice in how policing is delivered in the local area, by communicating and engaging with as many Cheshire residents, partners and stakeholders
- Reach more people by reflecting modern ways of communicating



Crewe and Nantwich citizens' assembly

Residents from the Crewe and Nantwich area were the first to take part in a series of three face to face workshops, facilitated by an independent research agency. These were supported in between by two online community sessions.

"Just getting everyone's input is really important and knowing that we're making a difference" - citizens' assembly participant.

Representatives from local bodies such as Cheshire East council, the local MP and Cheshire Constabulary, also provided oversight as part of an advisory Panel.

Each of the police and crime citizens' assemblies consisted of an accurately representative group of people who live in the local policing area. They were brought together to give their views on local crime and policing matters.

“I want to make sure that my policies and priorities are created together with people representing all parts of society. Typically, consultations are paper based and are quite often skewed. The great thing about this is that I can already see the difference that doing community led policing plans through citizens' assemblies is having in terms of conversations that are taking place and inputs I have been receiving to inform my Police and Crime Plan.”



Support for victims

Victims should be at the heart of all we do.

I will strive to implement measures designed to prevent harm from happening and will not lose focus on those who are affected by crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). As your PCC, there are many ways I can do this.

My promise to you:

- I will ensure victims receive the highest level of care, respect and support
- To help with this, I will commission specialist services which provide counselling, advocacy and practical support to create a pathway to recover
- I will establish a victims of crime board where the voice of the victim is understood to drive improvements and understanding in lived experiences

Victim Needs Assessment (VNA):

PCCs have responsibility for commissioning local services for victims of crime.

Therefore, I will carry out periodic assessments to understand the needs of victims, particularly from more vulnerable groups, to help inform future commissioning of services in Cheshire. The needs assessment will ensure that the right services are available, at the right time for those who are victims of crime.

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime:

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code) provides victims with an expectation of the minimum level of service they should receive from the Police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Courts Service and the Probation Service. The code outlines 12 rights that victims of crime can expect, explaining what each criminal justice agency should do for victims. The code is statutory and intended to standardise the level of service that victims receive, protecting their rights and raising the quality of support that is delivered.

I will ensure that victims are aware of their rights. As Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), I will work with the board to ensure an increasing and keen focus on compliance with the Victims' Code, driving real improvements in the experience that individuals receive.

The LCJB brings together key stakeholders in the criminal justice sector from across Cheshire, including the Constabulary, CPS, the Courts, Probation, local authorities and the third sector, to discuss issues of common concern. I am already working with partners to develop a more focused approach. This will drive process improvement and deliverable outcomes, with a keen focus on ensuring victims receive the best level of support possible, and addressing reoffending.



The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) allocates an annual grant of around £1.2m to my office that allows us to invest in victims' services. This funding has been utilised to deliver a wide range of services for victims including Cheshire CARES (Cope and Recovery Enhanced Service). This is the core service to provide support to victims of crime in Cheshire, to assist them to cope and recover as best they can. The service is provided to meet the needs of each individual and is offered seven days a week to anyone who has been a victim of crime, regardless of whether they have reported the offence to the police. The service dealt with 22,597 referrals in 2023/24, with a total of 19,630 victims supported.

Provision of information for victims

A Victim Information Pack (VIP) is in place which outlines a victim's entitlements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (VCOP) and provides information on the services available in Cheshire.

You can access this at

<https://www.cheshire-pcc.gov.uk/support-for-victims/victim-information-pack/>

A Victims' Service hub, which is part of my website, also provides an online directory of the support and advice agencies able to provide support in Cheshire. You can access this at

<https://www.cheshire-pcc.gov.uk/support-for-victims/a-z/>

Support for domestic abuse victim-survivors

Cheshire's four domestic abuse partnerships (one in each local authority) deliver a range of services to help those who experience domestic abuse and to tackle perpetrators, including funding for Independent Domestic Violence Advocates. Enhanced support for victims has been available over the last two years through the provision of Hollie Guard vouchers which allows vulnerable victims to access monitoring services to enhance safety. So far, over 2,000 of these have been allocated to those with the greatest need and further vouchers have been purchased.

A version that allows family and friends to monitor alerts is available as a free app to download.



Restorative justice programmes

Working alongside the Probation Service, the charity Remedi, has been commissioned to provide a Restorative Justice (RJ) and mediation services across Cheshire. Restorative justice can help the recovery process for the victim by providing an element of closure as they're able to hear first-hand the motives behind the offender's actions.

It also helps offenders understand the effect their crime has on the victim, with the intention of deterring them from committing further offences. The service has improved the consistency and quality of restorative justice and increased the uptake of this service by victims of crime and ASB.

Remedi also provide support via the 'Got your back' programme to young victims of crime with a 14.8% increase in victims supported from 2022/23 to 2023/24.

My promise to you:

- I will continue to support interventions such as these which help victims and change offender behaviour



I have also recently launched a victim support pathway, which is an online platform to support victim-survivors of domestic abuse in identifying and accessing the help they need at the right time.

<https://cheshire-cares.mysupportpathway.com/>

Domestic abuse affects many aspects of life, including housing, mental health, finances and children. Sadly, not all victims access the available support for various reasons. Together, we can support victim-survivors, regardless of where they are on their journey of healing. The platform is designed with clinical expertise, trauma-informed approaches and input from victim-survivors.

Support for victims



Survivors of rape and sexual assault

Sexual assault is a serious crime that leaves lasting scars on its victims and has no place in our society. As your Police and Crime Commissioner, I am committed to ensuring that every survivor receives the support and justice they deserve.

Support services for victims of rape and sexual assault are jointly commissioned with an alliance of funding partners, including my office, Cheshire's four local authorities and NHS England. The service, RASASC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre), supported more than 1,818 people in 2023/24. It's available to victims of recent and non-recent offences.



Victims of hate crime

Hate crime is a destructive act that targets individuals based on their identity, causing deep harm to victims and communities. I am unwavering in my commitment to combat hate crime in all its forms.

Remedi has been commissioned to deliver a hate crime service to victims across Cheshire. The support victims receive is trauma-informed and bespoke to individual needs. Trained specialist practitioners provide emotional and practical support to help victims cope and recover and reduce their fear.

My promise to victims:

- By regularly reviewing police performance and holding the Chief Constable to account, I will ensure that victims are getting the care and service they deserve. This includes making sure that police are using all the tools available to them, such as using protection orders and disclosure schemes
- I will keep a sharp focus on the training provided for police officers and staff on how to handle victims with care, respect and sensitivity, as well as make sure courses about recognising harm and vulnerability are completed



Technology and innovation

My promise to you:

- I will drive efficiencies and explore how technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics can drive forward my priorities
- I will embrace technology and innovation to ensure the service is well-equipped to deal with current and emerging threats
- Ensure I focus on innovative new ways of working to maximise intelligence and data-led policing, so police are present when and where they are needed most
- I will encourage a culture within Cheshire police that is open to new ideas and ways of working that continuously improve outcomes

I want to pioneer new technology and learn from best practice within policing, both regionally and nationally and partner with the National Centre for Police Productivity. In a recent citizens' assembly in Crewe, modernise came out as a top priority.

It's essential that our police officers spend more time on the streets, protecting and serving our community, rather than being bogged down by paperwork. Streamlining mundane and repetitive tasks through

technology means officers can focus on keeping communities safe. Partnering with the National Centre for Police Productivity, we will enable them to respond faster to incidents, engage more with victims and be proactive in preventing crime.

I will support the Chief Constable in achieving this goal, and I want to see Cheshire recognised nationally for its pioneering work.

Artificial Intelligence in policing can:

- Analyse data to identify crime hotspots
- Deliver surveillance
- Risk assess offenders
- Enter data and carry out back-office tasks



DyTASK

DyTASK is an intelligent policing platform. It allows forces to use an evidence-based approach to manage risks, understand demand and proactively dispatch officers to the places where they can make the most difference. DyTASK identifies where anti-social behaviour and serious violence offences are likely to happen and advises police where and when they should be present within the assigned hotspot areas. As a result, officers are assigned a patrol plan to follow which is sent from the application to their mobile phone.

Dytask was funded by the ASB hotspot money that was secured through my office, and I will support the ongoing costs being funded through the use of money seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA).

My promise to you:

I will be a pioneer for the use of other new technologies being used by the Constabulary, for example:

- Increase reach and response through the use of technology, by supporting initiatives such as drones
- Secure additional funding and work collaboratively with stakeholders to build on the work that's already been done
- See the Constabulary improve communications through automated AI services

I will make sure we are open and transparent in any use of AI and technology and will use an independent ethics Panel where concerns exist.



Online Safety Act 2023

The Online Safety Act 2023 introduced new criminal offences from January 2024, including cyberflashing, threatening communications and intimate image abuse.

AI can help identify these threats.

Modernise the police estate

I am keen that the police estate is fit for the future and can respond to the changing demands of modern policing. As part of this, it needs to embrace digital and agile working and support the well-being and health of the workforce. A new police station will open in Wilmslow, providing a modern new base for policing in the town. The redevelopment of that site will help fund a new, net zero local policing unit base in Crewe. This will provide state of the art accommodation for local officers, as well as providing additional space for specialist units to be re-housed there.

In turn, this will help free up other buildings which are near end of life to be sold to re-invest in modernising the estate. Only when the new Crewe base is fully operational will we look to dispose of the old police station and relocate the helpdesk, maintaining an accessible police presence in the town centre.

My promise to you:

- I will support neighbourhood policing by ensuring that there is an estate that supports officers and staff in the delivery of an outstanding service to the public. I will aim to co-locate with key partners, on a shared 'one public estate basis', to promote joined up and effective working
- I am keen to invest in current buildings in a way which is affordable. These will utilise modern materials and methods to be kinder to the environment and provide a more functional space for officers and staff
- I will focus on the delivery of the Environmental Strategy 2021 - 2031 which commits to minimising the impact on the environment and best practice whilst supporting operational activity

Reduce crime

Reducing crime is a fundamental priority for the public. It's more than just statistics. It's a commitment to improve the lives and well-being of people who live, work and visit Cheshire. Safe communities attract businesses, tourism and residents, contributing to a thriving local economy. It's about creating an environment where people feel confident to live, work and raise their families.

Whilst developing this plan, there have been emerging themes causing real concerns for people and I will continue to raise these issues with the Chief Constable. Reports of drug related activity in public, e-scooters and illegal off-road bikes as well as shoplifting and violence against retail workers. Rural crime, fraud and other cybercrime also feature regularly in my conversations.

I will ensure there is an accessible and responsive police service in Cheshire

A responsive police service is essential to ensuring community safety and fostering public trust. Effective policing means being available and responsive to the needs of the community and addressing emergencies promptly. It also means maintaining a visible presence to deter criminal activities.

My promise to you:

- I will monitor response times to incidents and call handling performance as well as those less urgent, but no less important, calls for service
- I will support the sophisticated methods that are being used by the Constabulary to identify 'hotspot' areas to allocate resources and make sure they are aligned with community concerns

Regular engagement with the community being easy to reach

Police community engagement is essential for building trust and collaboration with both the public and partners. Through consistent and meaningful interactions, officers can better understand the needs and concerns of the communities they serve. This proactive approach helps to identify and address issues before they escalate, creating a safer and more supportive environment.

My promise to you:

- I will ensure the Constabulary is achieving this and maximising the potential to interact to help build a strong relationship between the police and the community

Improve the rate at which criminals are brought to justice

Quickly investigating crimes and prosecuting offenders not only delivers justice for victims but also gives a powerful message that crime will not go unpunished.

Many offences are against the most vulnerable people in our society and criminals often exploit their circumstances for personal gain. This can include manipulating those who are isolated, elderly, or experiencing financial hardship. Such exploitation is not only unethical but also causes significant harm to the victims, leaving them in even more vulnerable situations.

I have learned through my conversations across the county that rural crime, shoplifting as well as violent behaviour towards people carrying out their work, is having a detrimental effect on businesses and farming communities.

My promise to you:

- I will work with the Chief Constable to understand how crime and anti-social behaviour are preventing local businesses from thriving and ensure the Constabulary is focused on tackling these issues



Citizens in Policing

Citizens in Policing is the term to describe the thousands of people who give up their time to support the police. This is through roles that are managed and supported by forces or with the organisations that closely align to the police, connecting communities to policing and vice versa.

I am supported by many volunteers in Cheshire who provide me with insightful feedback on how Cheshire Constabulary is delivering its service to the public. Our volunteers play an important role in the scrutiny of the Constabulary and their recommendations shape improvements in the way services are delivered.

Reducing neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour

You told me...

My neighbourhood policing promise

Neighbourhood policing and targeted hotspot patrols are vital to community safety and crime reduction.

It involves officers building relationships with communities, understanding local concerns and addressing issues together. This proactive approach builds trust and encourages residents to cooperate with the police, leading to safer communities.

I have supported the Chief Constable in his refresh of the neighbourhood policing model to make it better suited to the needs of our diverse communities.

Neighbourhood policing is at the heart of building safer communities

My promise to you:

- To make sure officers work in partnership with communities and other stakeholders to build a positive relationship
- To provide a designated contact who will be a police officer or PCSO for an area, contactable via a direct email address
- Using local proactive policing methods, identifying hotspots and high need as well as identifying by whom, what and where most harm is being caused in a community

Reducing crime against vulnerable people

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

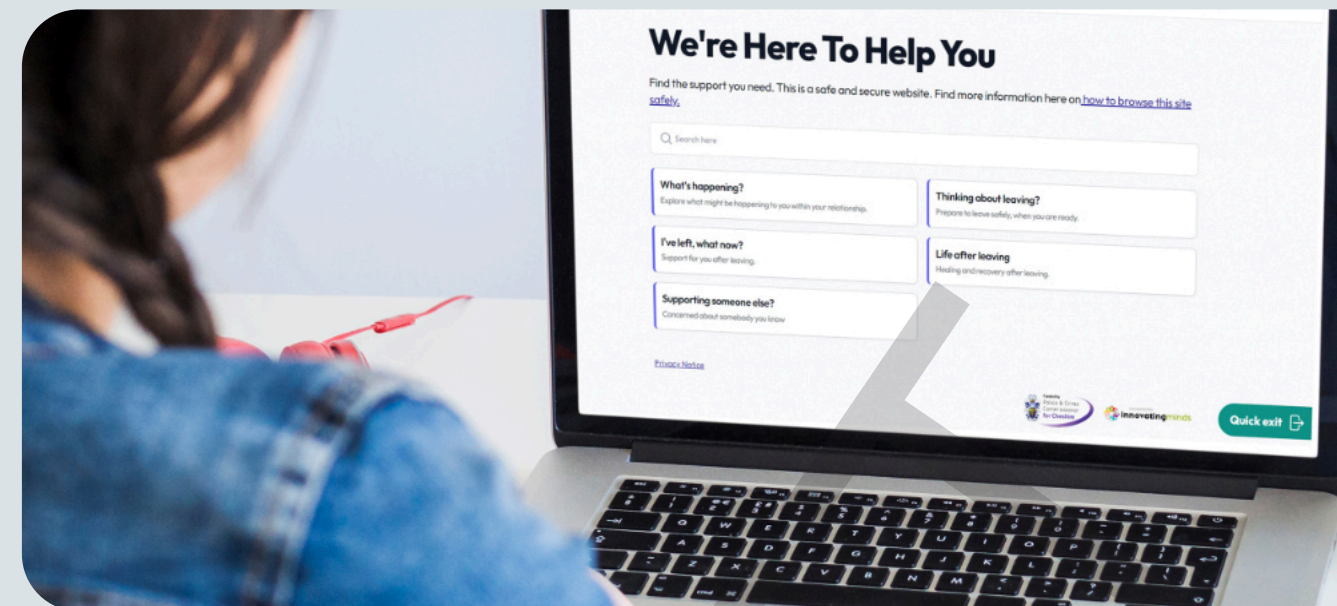
VAWG has been brought into sharp focus by a number of tragic and high-profile cases. The problem is endemic and currently the system is failing to tackle these crimes effectively. In 2023, the Office for National Statistics reported that 27% of women over the age of 16 had experienced a form of harassment over the last 12 months. A 2021 Ofsted report found nearly 90% of girls were sent explicit pictures to either themselves or their peers*.

VAWG is a serious societal issue that requires urgent and effective action. I am committed to implementing strategies that prioritise the safety and well-being of women and girls in our community. This includes prevention and education as well as supporting victims. I am in the unique position to bring together partners to do this. Together, we can create public spaces where women and girls feel safe as well as where they live, work or learn.

It's important that reporting these crimes is easy and the service is delivered with empathy so that women and girls feel safe to report their concerns. I will make sure this is happening in Cheshire. I will maintain a relentless focus in this area and will run awareness campaigns to highlight the issue of VAWG, challenge societal norms that condone violence and promote available support services. I will encourage a community-wide stance against VAWG.

My promise to you:

- I will challenge the system to do better and drive positive change through the delivery of high-quality commissioned services to protect all women and girls and other vulnerable people. This will be through prevention, challenging offending behaviour and when a crime does occur, ensuring vital victim and survivor support is provided



Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is a big issue that affects individuals and families across our community. 19% of all crimes reported in Cheshire in the year to September 2024 were domestic abuse flagged crimes. I am dedicated to tackling this serious problem and will continuously review the approach delivered by the Constabulary making sure it is effective, based on the latest research and responsive to the needs of all victims, including men and children.

Domestic abuse can manifest in various forms, each causing significant harm to the victim. The abuse can be physical, emotional, psychological, financial or sexual and can lead to devastating results. Perpetrators may seek to control their victims and use controlling and coercive behaviour by restricting their movements, access to money as well as isolating them from family and friends. It's important that people recognise the signs of abuse and know where to get help.

I am pleased that both VAWG and domestic abuse are a priority for the Constabulary with a lot of positive work already underway. It is important that I prioritise areas of need and will invest in areas of high demand such as Halton, which has one of the highest domestic abuse rates in the country.

My promise to you:

- I will monitor the reporting of domestic abuse incidents and will work with hard-to-reach communities to understand reporting barriers
- I will focus on driving up positive outcomes for victims and will work to understand how there can be improvements in keeping victims engaged to get a prosecution
- I will monitor how well the police are using tools such as protective orders and disclosures. It's vital that those most at risk of harm are protected and perpetrators who breach restrictions are dealt with

EDUCATION IS KEY TO ENDING DOMESTIC ABUSE

Learning what a healthy relationship looks like is crucial to preventing future offending.

Breaking the Cycle
of Domestic Abuse

#LoveShouldNotHurt



At the time of publishing this report, Cheshire Police has one of the highest charge rates for domestic abuse (DA) in the country and I will work closely with the Constabulary and related partners to make sure this remains the case.

*Office for National Statistics. Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2024. Ofsted. Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges. London: Ofsted, June 2021.



Stalking

Stalking is a serious crime that invades a person's privacy and security causing distress and fear with long-lasting effects. It's critical that both victims and the police recognise the signs early to prevent further harm.

Harassment of victims involves repeated and unwanted behaviour such as sending threatening messages, making unwanted phone calls, or showing up uninvited at the victim's home or workplace.

Cyberstalking is another form of harassment, through social media, emails or other online platforms. This can include monitoring online activities, sending abusive messages or creating fake accounts to stalk the victim.

I will work with the Chief Constable, commissioned service providers and charities to ensure the workforce understands and recognises the signs of stalking. I will also make sure a seamless service is given to victims where they receive support, advice and protection.

My promise to you:

- Making sure victims have access to an Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworker, as well as upskilling Independent Domestic Violence Advocates to identify and address stalking
- Protect victims where possible through Stalking Protection Orders
- Build on existing relationships with organisations such as the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to improve understanding

Cheshire Police has the highest charge rate in the country for stalking and harassment. They have a dedicated Harm Reduction Unit (HRU) that focuses on managing risk in cases of stalking and serial domestic abuse.

In November 2024, I joined Jess Phillips, the Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls when she met the Harm Reduction Unit at Cheshire Constabulary. She heard how this amazing team works in a joined up way with psychologists and stakeholders to protect victims and secure convictions.

Honour-based abuse

Honour-based abuse is a violation of human rights, often hidden behind cultural or family expectations. It's a form of violence that can include physical and emotional harm. As a community, we must ensure that every individual is free to live their life without fear for their personal choices.

Education and awareness are crucial in combating honour-based abuse.

Rape and sexual assault

Rape and sexual assault are crimes that have a profound and lasting impact on victims and we need to make sure they receive the support and justice needed.

Operation Soteria represents a crucial step forward in transforming the response to rape and serious sexual offences. This initiative is not just about improving our investigation processes; it's about fundamentally reshaping how victims are supported and how offenders are held accountable.

Education and prevention are key.

My promise to you:

- I will work hard with key partners to make sure that perpetrators are brought to justice and that the appropriate care and support is provided to survivors
- All stakeholders will uphold a culture where sexual violence and abuse is recognised in all forms, understanding that victims and perpetrators can be of any gender, age, or sexual orientation
- I will monitor the Constabulary for compliance with the Operation Soteria recommendations
- I will ensure there are enough Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) to manage the needs of survivors and support them through the justice system

Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) shows **one in five women and one in 11 men** aged over 16 has been a victim of stalking.

Reducing serious violent crime

Serious violent crime, including knife crime, can result in significant harm or the threat of harm to individuals. Whilst Cheshire has one of the lowest homicide rates

My promise to you:

- Working with the Chief Constable and other agencies to deliver outstanding neighbourhood policing through enhanced police presence and relationships with communities. This means when police resources are focused on known hotspots and on repeat offenders, they can disrupt patterns of violence
- To identify at-risk individuals at an early stage to provide them with support services to help steer them away from criminal activity. I am committed to implementing projects that engage young

it does not mean there is no threat. Reducing serious violent crime involves a multi-agency approach that addresses both prevention and intervention with work being done with partners through my office.

- people in positive activities and provide alternatives to involvement in violent crime
- I will look to commission educational programmes to help young people understand the risks of carrying a knife, or how a single punch can be fatal, as well as working more closely with communities to deliver these important messages

Reducing organised crime

While organised crime often operates on a national or even international scale, its impact on the streets of Cheshire should not be underestimated. Criminals involved in this type of crime frequently commit 'low level' offences, producing a climate of fear within their communities.

Vulnerable members of the community are often targeted by those involved in organised crime, particularly in the operation of county lines drug activity. Professional criminals exploit smaller towns or cities to expand their drug trade, using fear and violence to get local people to sell drugs on their behalf. In a tactic known as 'cuckooing', offenders take over the home of a vulnerable person to use it as a base for drug trafficking.

My promise to you:

- I will fully support Cheshire Constabulary's work with other agencies, such as the North-West Regional and Organised Crime Unit and the National Crime Agency, to address these issues as well as other serious organised criminality and to identify and tackle emerging threats

Reducing acquisitive crime

Acquisitive crime refers to offences where someone makes money through theft or fraud. This is typically money or property that belongs to someone else. Offences of this type include burglary, robbery, theft and vehicle crime.

These are not low-level crimes when individuals and businesses suffer financial loss, emotional distress and feel insecure, preventing communities from thriving. Tackling these crimes often involves improving security measures, increasing police patrols and promoting vigilance.

My promise to you:

- To monitor Constabulary performance, in its response to incidents and the outcome of investigations

Understanding and combating fraud and cybercrime

Fraud occurs when an offender deceitfully misleads an individual or business for personal gain, typically financial, resulting in a loss for the victim. Cybercrime can be two types:

- **Cyber-dependent crimes:** These are offences that can only be done through the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The ICT devices are both the instruments and targets of the crime, such as developing and distributing malware for financial gain or hacking to steal sensitive information
- **Cyber-enabled crimes:** These are traditional crimes that can be amplified or facilitated by the use of ICT. This is where fraud and cybercrime often meet.

Fraud and cybercrime present a substantial threat. The volume and complexity of these crimes is continually increasing. The police need to remain vigilant in identifying and disrupting online criminal activity to reduce victimisation and protect the public from harm. Collaborating with other enforcement agencies is essential to do this.

The Constabulary must continue to improve its capability to address this growing type of crime and develop the expertise of the existing workforce. It's essential they support victims and break the cycle of re-victimisation. This support aims to help the most vulnerable recover from what can be a profoundly traumatic experience.

I will also work with the regional Cyber Resilience Centre to help local businesses be more aware of cyber threats and help them develop the ability to be more resilient to such attacks.

The Strategic Policing Requirement

The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) was first issued in July 2012, in accordance with section 77 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, and was subsequently updated in 2015.

Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables must consider the SPR when carrying out their functions.

National threats

The latest version of the SPR introduces violence against women and girls as an additional national threat and reaffirms the validity of the existing threats.

The national threats set out in the SPR are:

- violence against women and girls
- terrorism
- serious and organised crime
- a national cyber incident
- child sexual abuse
- public disorder
- civil emergencies

National Crime and Policing Measures

These are a range of government national priorities to help focus on key national priorities.

They complement existing local priorities set out in PCCs' local Police and Crime Plans and each police force has a key role in supporting the measures. PCCs are required to provide a statement on the contribution of their force to achieving improvements.

The six key national policing priorities are as follows:

- Reduce murder and other homicide
- Reduce serious violence
- Disrupt drugs supply and county lines
- Reduce neighbourhood crime
- Tackle cybercrime
- Improve satisfaction among victims with a particular focus on victims of domestic abuse

Prevention and intervention

My promise to you:

- To embed a prevention-first culture to prevent crime through community partnerships and stakeholder engagement
- To tackle the root causes of criminality by supporting the rehabilitation of people who have offended or who are at risk of doing so
- To support the reduction of reoffending by helping and supporting ex-offenders into employment. I will work with local business leaders, probation and prison leads to develop employment opportunities for those leaving prison and in the community who may otherwise turn to crime
- Creating behaviour change programmes for perpetrators of domestic abuse and stalking

I am in a strong position to support prevention and intervention through commissioning services to support victims and witnesses. I am also responsible for commissioning activities which will contribute to community safety and crime reduction.

Serious violence

During 23/24 a new Serious Violence Reduction Partnership was formed which developed a local strategy to develop key interventions. This saw the Constabulary and partners introduce a new approach to the identification and management of serious domestic abuse perpetrators.

Recently I have taken the National Association of Police and Crime Commissioner (APCC) lead for Sports Violence Reduction Partnerships. Following which a local partnership has been developed (Street Games and Active Cheshire) to assist in developing secondary and tertiary interventions for young people using sport.

A partnership with Cheshire Community Foundation has added private funding to public funds. This has so far commissioned 11 small projects targeting vulnerable

and at-risk young people engaging them in purposeful activity where they can develop trusted positive relationships. I am committed to continuing this type of work.

Other actions of the partnership include:

- Developing a prevention partnership to identify and support children at risk of future engagement in serious violence
- Be evidence led when commissioning services to address the needs of young people at risk of becoming involved in serious violence
- Putting effective monitoring and evaluation in place to make sure the expected outcomes are being delivered
- Continually monitoring serious violence and be responsive in the use of the interventions needed

Wolf whistle ✗
Be suggestive ✗
Intimidate her ✗
Leave her alone ✓

Stand with women

not against them

NO MORE EXCUSES

Safer Streets
 Working together for even safer streets in Cheshire

Safer Streets 5

Following a successful bid to the Home Office for £820,000, the funds were allocated within three key hotspot areas. This is being used in situational crime prevention (such as CCTV and drones), Restorative Justice practices to support victims and educating perpetrators on behaviours and harm caused to prevent future reoffending.



SWAP FUND
 Turning criminal money into positive action

Dan Price | Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner

SWAP Fund

The SWAP Fund is my community fund which looks to take money seized from the proceeds of crime and reinvest it back into Cheshire's communities. SWAP stands for **S**afety, **W**orking together, **A**ction and **P**revention. Projects awarded funding deliver against one or more of these areas and have a clear link to one of the priorities within this Plan. In 2024, the fund increased from £100,000 to £200,000 through express grants for projects under £1,000 and main grants up to the value of £5,000.

I will continue to support local people in their communities to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.



Finances

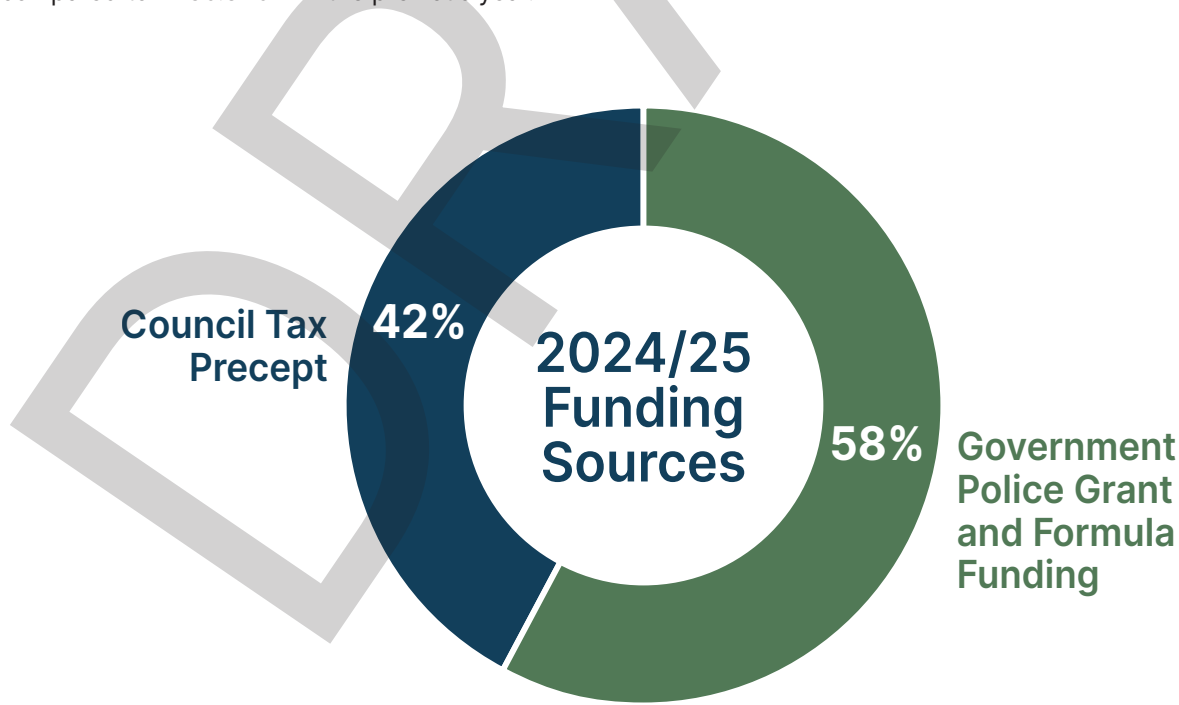
Cheshire Constabulary has two main sources of funding; grant income from central government and the policing precept – the element of council tax allocated to policing. The grant from central government fluctuates year-on-year, while the local policing precept is set by me annually following consultation with local residents.

There has been a shift in how policing in Cheshire is funded over the last decade. In 2010/11 28% of Cheshire's funding came from council tax, compared to 42% in 2024/25. However, Cheshire remains in the bottom 11 forces nationally in terms of precept costs.

Following years of austerity, followed by a sustained period of high inflation, the financial climate we operate in remains difficult. As policing becomes more complex and pressures increase, there needs to be sufficient funding in place to deliver an effective service. For 2024/25, following a financial resilience survey carried out by policing, the government in place at the time recognised these increasing pressures. Through a combination of grant increases and policing precept flexibility, the funding available for Cheshire increased, giving a net budget of £249.830m for 2024/25 compared to £236.846m in the previous year.

I will continue to work with the government to ensure Cheshire Constabulary remains adequately funded. I will use my annual priority-based budgeting process to identify efficiency savings and modernisation opportunities for the forthcoming year. I will also look at opportunities to redirect resources to priority functions to deliver against my Police and Crime Plan. In building my Plan, I have listened to the public of Cheshire and taken account of the views expressed by all.

I will continue to apply for funding to enhance the way we work and to focus on innovation to protect all communities and make Cheshire safer.



Scrutiny and accountability

How I will be accountable to you

I participate in public meetings, including those at parish, and borough council levels, to understand community needs. I will ensure my office regularly organises events so that individuals and communities are heard and the vital work of my office is better understood. I welcome correspondence from local people and my office plays a vital role in assisting people through the police complaints process and helping them navigate the criminal justice system.

I will publish a newsletter, which already has more than 6,000 subscribers and I will actively engage with the community through social media to discuss crime and policing matters.

My commitments include:



Hold regular scrutiny meetings with the Chief Constable.



Seek independent assurance through volunteers and independent panels.

Obtain the views of victims of crime about matters concerning policing.



Produce an annual report detailing progress against the plan.



Hear the voice of young people through my Youth Commission.

Engage with community groups to hear their concerns and represent their voice.

Attend community meetings with police, local MPs and Councillors to address local issues.



Respond to questions and challenge raised by the Police and Crime Panel in relation to my decisions or actions taken in respect of me discharging statutory functions as PCC.

Youth Commission

Cheshire Youth Commission (CYC) enables young people to support, challenge and inform the work of myself and Cheshire Constabulary.

The Commission is made up of enthusiastic young ambassadors, who give up their time to consult with other young people about their policing priorities and things that matter most to them. Every year they are tasked with consulting with over 2,000 young people aged 14-25 years and sharing this research with myself and the Constabulary to make positive changes to improve the service to the young public of Cheshire.

This year the Youth Commission focused on the following four priorities:

- Community safety and ASB
- Hate crime
- Sexual harassment
- Online safety

In 2024 they were involved in creating a 'Consent' campaign, encouraging young people to start a conversation about sexual consent following a worrying rise in recorded offences.

Since 2019 there has been an increase of just over 60 per cent in recorded sexual offences in Cheshire where the victim and the suspect/offender are both under the age of 18.

Sexual activity is an uncomfortable subject to talk about, but research shows that encouraging effective communication and empowering young people to have positive conversations with their peers and their partners is essential to helping reduce sexual offending.

Many schools across Cheshire have signed up to use the resources provided by the campaign as well as other community organisations and those with young people in their care.

At the beginning of 2024, 15 new members were recruited to the Youth Commission, bringing the total to 31. Through peer-to-peer conversations and online surveys, views and opinions were gathered from a diverse range of young people on key priorities. Furthermore, interactive workshops have been delivered across different settings to raise awareness and spark conversations around four priorities. All key findings and recommendations for the police, PCC, CYC and partners were presented at the annual CYC's Conference.



Volunteers

My office is supported by a team of highly skilled local volunteers who give their time, commitment and knowledge to help. The experiences and expertise that every volunteer brings is fundamental to the work I do in scrutinising the Chief Constable.



Call Management Auditors: Volunteers who evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency and non-emergency call handling in the force control centre.



Police Dog Welfare Visitors: Volunteers who ensure the health, welfare and working conditions of police dogs (jointly with North Wales OPCC) are of the highest standards.

Independent Custody Visitors: Volunteers who visit the three police custody suites to check on the welfare and rights of detainees in custody.

Consultation and engagement volunteers help us build stronger relationships with communities and their input is highly valued. Importantly, through our volunteers, local residents are further able to have voice about the things that matter most to them.

Continuous engagement

I really enjoy getting out and about and talking to as many people as possible. It's really important to me that I reach all corners of the county and listen to the views of the diverse communities that make Cheshire, Cheshire.

This is something that myself, my deputies and team will be doing tirelessly. I will be tracking the areas, projects and organisations that we visit so I can show you that I am the voice of all communities when it comes to policing.

Hearing how crime impacts different groups of people is crucial for me to deliver a Police and Crime plan that is relevant to all of the county.

I will also continue to communicate through my website and newsletter all the latest news as well as show you through my social media accounts what I have been up to recently. You can get in touch through those channels as well as email, phone and post.



Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner



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Policing and fire governance

Guidance for police
and crime panels

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Foreword

This guidance has been produced for police (fire) and crime panel chairs, members and support officers and those with whom they work. It is intended to provide information about the statutory roles of panels and to highlight good practice that has been developed over the years since panels were first established.

Since 2012, panels have shown that they are able to play a constructive role in providing challenge and support to police and crime commissioners. They are an intrinsic part of a network of relationships and processes, and integral to the governance arrangements for policing - and more recently, for some fire and rescue services.

Good governance, robust scrutiny and strong supportive partnerships are essential for communities who rely on excellent police and fire and rescue services, a fair criminal justice system and effective blue light collaboration. They are also important for a vibrant local democracy. Panels have an important role to play in these arrangements.

This is an informal guide which the Local Government Association (LGA) commissioned in order to provide information on the legislation and regulations affecting panels and their statutory functions, as well as examples of good practice by panels.

Different sections of the document provide an overview of policing and fire governance; outline panels' specific functions; and provide ideas on how they can work with key stakeholders and manage their work in a way that adds value and builds capacity and effectiveness. In short, it sets out their diverse roles and opportunities within the context of policing and crime accountabilities.

It will be for panels, in consultation with their commissioner and commissioner's office, to work out their most effective local ways of working, but we hope this guidance will assist with the prioritisation of their work and in choosing the most appropriate approaches to their varied tasks.

Councillor Simon Blackburn

Chair, LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Section one: Overview of governance arrangements in policing and crime

Following enactment of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (the Act), the election of the first police and crime commissioners (PCCs/commissioners) took place in 41 police force areas in England and Wales in November 2012.

Commissioners' responsibilities

Commissioners are required to:

- Secure the maintenance of the police force for that area and ensure that the police force is efficient and effective.
- Set the budget and precept for the force.
- Establish local priorities for the force through a police and crime plan which must have regard for the strategic policing requirement set by the Home Secretary, and to which the chief constable must also have regard.
- Hold the chief constable to account for the exercise of her/his functions and those under her/his direction and control, including performance against the police and crime plan and a number of specific functions, such as equalities, the force's engagement with local people, force collaboration arrangements and, most recently, police complaints.
- Use their powers to appoint, reappoint and/or dismiss the chief constable.
- Publish information specified by the Secretary of State and information that the commissioner considers necessary to enable the people who live in the force areas to assess the performance of the commissioner and the chief constable.
- Monitor complaints made against police officers and staff, whilst having responsibility for complaints made against the chief constable.
- Commission victims' services.
- Enter into collaboration agreements (in consultation with the chief constable) between other commissioners and forces where it would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of one or more forces.
- Use their powers to make crime and disorder reduction grants
- Use their powers in England to bring local community safety partnerships and local criminal justice board partners together to enhance criminal justice in the area. In Wales, commissioners do not have this power; however, they may work through local public service boards to encourage collective partnership working to improve the delivery of community safety and criminal justice services.

These responsibilities were clarified through the policing protocol, produced by the Home Office, which defined the relationship between the commissioner, the panel and the chief constable and affirms that the commissioner:

- has responsibility for setting the 'strategic direction and objectives of the force' and monitoring performance including against the priorities in the police and crime plan
- has responsibility for holding the chief constable to account, but must not fetter the chief constable's operational independence or that of the force
- will provide the local link between the police and the public, working to translate

the legitimate desires and aspirations of the public into action

- must comply with all reasonable formal requests from the panel to attend its meetings
- must prepare and issue an annual report to the panel covering delivery against the objectives in the police and crime plan.

A head of paid service is a designated post in an office of the police and crime commissioner (OPCC) and under the Act is specified as the commissioner's chief executive.

Strategic policing requirement

As well as understanding local need, carrying out local risk assessments and responding to local priorities, a commissioner will need to be aware of and support activity to address threats that require a national policing response. This is set out in the strategic policing requirement (SPR).

The SPR covers the national capabilities that police forces in England and Wales are expected to have in place to address cross-boundary threats such as civil emergencies, organised crime, public disorder and terrorism. Commissioners must take account of the SPR when setting their police and crime plan and hold their chief constables to account for their compliance with it.

Policing protocol and panel responsibilities

'The public accountability for the delivery and performance of the police service is placed into the hands of the PCC on behalf of their electorate. The PCC draws on their mandate to set and shape the strategic objectives of their force area in consultation with the Chief Constable. They are accountable to the electorate; the Chief Constable is accountable to their PCC. The [Police and Crime] Panel within each force area is empowered to maintain a regular check and balance on the performance of the PCC in that context.'

Section 14 of the Policing Protocol 2011¹

As directly elected office holders, commissioners are held to account by the electorate in the police force area through elections every four years. However, during their term of office, their police and crime panels (PCPs/panels) perform roles of challenge/scrutiny, for example to review the proposed precept, and support; for example, to assist the commissioner to deliver the police and crime plan or to submit evidence from reviews to inform the commissioner's work.

These roles collectively relate to the 'special functions' which panels are required by the Act to undertake. These are explained more fully in section two, but in summary relate to:

- scrutiny of:
 - the police and crime plan
 - the annual report
 - the precept
 - senior appointments (through a process of confirmation hearings) – these

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2011/2744/schedule/made

duties are known as a panel's 'special functions'

- complaints handling
- discharge of the commissioner's functions.

All panel activity should be justified with reference to undertaking these core duties. Panels are required to establish panel arrangements, dealing with their composition, the role of the panel and support to be provided to it; and rules of procedure, setting out how they will be chaired, make decisions and manage any sub-committees.

The legislation requires that panels' activity generally should be informed by the need to support the PCC, so it should be expected that the challenge brought by formal scrutiny activity will be driven by the need to make a positive impact on the delivery by the PCC of their own duties and priorities.

The twin roles of 'challenge' and 'support' are important ones for panels, but there have sometimes been challenges where panels have taken a different view of the scope of their role than the local PCC or office of the Commissioner, who have perceived this to be more limited. Understanding and agreeing these roles and what they mean is essential if panels and commissioners are to have a positive working relationship, and some areas have found it helpful to agree a memorandum of understanding for this. In practice, it means that panels have a role of oversight over commissioners' activities, which involves:

- seeking to understand the strategic needs for policing in the area the commissioner serves
- using that insight and understanding to support the commissioner to carry out her/his statutory duties
- reviewing key activities and priorities including the delivery and resourcing of the plan.

In summary, panels are therefore an integral part of the governance structures for policing and crime in England and Wales outside of London. In England, panels are joint

committees, formed of representatives of the local authorities within the police force area and at least two independent members who are co-opted onto the panel. The four panels in Wales (Dyfed Powys, Gwent, North Wales and South Wales) are 'Part 3 panels', established by and answerable to the Home Secretary.

Mayoral arrangements

The functions of the commissioner may be taken on by the directly elected (executive) mayor in an area with a combined authority. Bringing a commissioner's responsibilities alongside those of a combined authority mayor are intended to lead to greater opportunities for alignment between strategic policing and other public functions. Provision is made for scrutiny of the mayor through a police and crime panel formed from constituent authorities, in relation to specific responsibilities for policing and crime.

The Mayor for Greater Manchester acts as the police and crime commissioner and has appointed a Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime to support the discharge of functions. In the West Midlands in early 2019, the combined authority decided against seeking to merge the role of commissioner and mayor. At the time of writing, no formal plans were in train in other combined authority areas for similar mergers.

In London, the elected mayor is the equivalent of the PCC and responsible for policing (outside of the City of London, which has its own police force). The Mayor delegates authority to the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and works through the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). MOPAC has strategic oversight of devising a police and crime plan and ensuring it is delivered over the term of office. The Police and Crime Committee of the London Assembly examines the work of MOPAC and conducts thematic investigations on key issues such as serious violence, frontline policing and counter-terrorism.

Every month the committee publicly questions senior representatives from the Metropolitan Police and MOPAC, including the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

Police, fire and crime functions

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 (the 2017 Act) included provisions intended to enhance collaboration between the emergency services in England and Wales. It:

- Introduced a high-level duty on police, fire and rescue and emergency ambulance services across England and Wales to keep collaboration opportunities under review and to enter into them where it is in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness.
- Enables commissioners in England to take on the functions and duties of their local fire and rescue authority ('the governance model'), where the Home Secretary agrees that a local case has been made to demonstrate how the transfer is in the interests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, or is in the interest of public safety.
- Further enables commissioners in England who have taken on responsibility for fire and rescue, and mayors of combined authorities who exercise both police and fire functions, to delegate fire and rescue functions to a single chief officer for police and fire, where a local case is made ('the single employer model').
- In areas in England where a commissioner has not become responsible for fire and rescue, enables commissioners to have representation on their local fire and rescue authority with voting rights, where the fire and rescue authority agrees.

In Wales, the four commissioners have neither the option nor the power to take on direct responsibility for fire and rescue

services which, unlike policing, have been devolved. Fire and rescue authorities remain as separate bodies with their own governance and funding arrangements. option nor power.

Where a commissioner takes on governance of fire and rescue services, the commissioner replaces the fire and rescue authority which previously controlled the management of the fire and rescue service and which, depending on the precise form of the authority, had been comprised of councillors from county, unitary and district councils and lay members including magistrates. The chief fire officer subsequently manages the service in agreement with the commissioner.

The additional powers of a PFCC are to:

- implement a fire and rescue plan
- set fire and rescue service budgets
- dismiss and appoint a chief fire officer.

The expanded powers of police, fire and crime commissioners are reflected in the broader responsibilities of the police, fire and crime panels (PFCPs), which have also assumed further statutory roles.

A panel's special functions and wider role remain the same in providing challenge to and support for the commissioner but expand to include scrutiny of its commissioner in relation to her/his fire and rescue service functions as well. As such, PFCPs will be expected to:

- scrutinise an additional fire plan as well as a police and crime plan (the plans may be amalgamated into a single police, fire and crime plan)
- agree precept levels for both fire and police (which are considered separately)
- scrutinise the appointment, suspension and removal process of the chief fire officer.

The panel is also under a duty to review its membership to ensure it has the necessary skills, expertise and knowledge to fulfil its

functions in relation to fire and rescue. New PFCPs will need to consider whether the existing membership includes those with expertise not only of policing and crime, but also of fire and rescue services or whether changes need to be made through additional co-options or new appointments.

When panel members are being selected for representation on a police, fire and crime panel, local authorities should have regard to the need to appoint members who may have existing experience in oversight and governance in the fire and rescue landscape as well as policing and criminal justice.

Other collaboration

Modern policing depends upon multi-agency approaches to tackle crime and address its causes, and under the 2011 Act the commissioner plays a significant role in bringing relevant bodies together to work in partnership to deliver her/his priorities. This will include providers of services the PCC is required to commission eg victims' services.

Given this multi-agency approach, panels should be aware of their commissioner's range of partnership contributions when scrutinising their role. This might require informal information sharing between panels and organisations and between a number of panels whose respective commissioners collaborate. However, formal multi-panel scrutiny of commissioners has the potential to be unwieldy and to risk panels acting beyond their formal powers, as explained further below.

Section two: Panels' statutory powers and duties

The five statutory duties of panels are the core element of their work and referred to as special functions.

Reviewing the precept

The commissioner is responsible for setting the budget and the precept for the police force. The precept and budget should be based on the priorities set out in the police and crime plan and reflect the resources available to deliver them.

The legislative requirement is for the panel to review the precept proposed by the commissioner. Each year, before 1 February, the commissioner is required to notify the panel of the precept that s/he is proposing to issue for the following financial year. The panel must review the precept and make a report, including recommendations, which could include the exercise of a veto (as detailed below). Although panels do not have a role in setting the budget, their scrutiny of the precept will need some awareness of the budget and a report will inevitably accompany the precept proposals to give background.

At a time of unprecedented financial challenge, significant changes in the nature, type, scale and complexity of crime and increasing public expectations of policing, panels will need to be familiar with the range of challenges and pressures on the commissioner and the diversity of responses to those by the commissioner, her/his office and the wider public sector. In reviewing the proposed budget and precept, panels will also need to be aware of the priorities and objectives in the police and crime plan,

in order to consider whether resources are being made available to deliver the plan.

To ensure they are sufficiently informed and able to provide effective scrutiny of the precept, panels will need to gather information in advance of the meetings and carry out in-year monitoring of the budget eg spend against the plan and strategy and in-year variance.

In scrutinising the commissioner's precept, the panel could review:

- the budget
- the police and crime plan and the resources required for delivery
- the medium-term financial strategy
- the overall police settlement
- reserves
- capital spend
- options available
- specific issues, for example reductions in grant, cost recovery from policing large events, transparency regarding the use of resources and the procurement strategy, possibly with other forces.

Scrutiny of the precept will have to be carefully planned and carried out in a fair and transparent manner, especially as the panel has the power to issue one veto over the policing precept in each year (see below). Panels will need to understand budget material to be able to offer effective challenge and support of the commissioner on the proposed precept. Panels could therefore hold briefings potentially provided by the commissioner and

her/his chief finance officer, and/or training that might be supported by the host authority's finance officer.

The provision by the commissioner of background information explaining the budget and precept proposals will help the panel to direct its scrutiny effectively. Informal liaison, in advance of the formal panel meeting where the budget is to be discussed, will allow members of the panel to deal with general, exploratory questions and will ensure that the formal session itself can be focused and forensic. It will allow potential points of disagreement to be identified and highlighted and plans to be developed to deal with those issues constructively when the panel meets formally.

Precept scrutiny

A panel's questioning plan in relation to the commissioner's precept should focus on strategy, not numerical details and be used to seek clarification, test evidence and assumptions and explore options best able to deliver the police and crime plan through the proposed precept. Questions panels might ask their commissioner could include whether the precept enables funding to follow priorities; whether value for money is being secured; and whether there is a robust monitoring framework. Examples include:

- Is the police and crime plan integrated with budget setting and monitoring?
- Is scrutiny adequately built in to challenge how resources are allocated, to monitor how they are used and to examine their impact?
- Are resources delivering value for money?
- What are the risks?
- How will the increase in the precept enable you to deliver specific objectives in your plan?

One panel has designated a member champion for finance and resources to lead on precept scrutiny; it has a member champion for each of the commissioner's five priorities in his plan. In 2018/19 and 2019/20, the precept setting process was much improved as the member champion was in close dialogue with the commissioner's chief finance officer/ S151 officer. They met on a regular basis throughout November, December and January. In the pre-meeting to the precept meeting, the member champion updated panel members and answered their questions, addressed their concerns and provided clarity where required. Consequently, the panel was much more efficient and effective in transacting business at the main precept meeting.

Although some panels establish budget working groups or designate a member to lead on this, the panel must meet formally to consider the proposed figure of the precept: this cannot be delegated to a sub-committee of the panel. The commissioner must be invited to attend this formal meeting of the panel at which the precept is to be discussed. Once this has occurred the panel will be able to make recommendations – in particular, whether it wishes to:

- support the precept without qualification or comment
- support the precept and make recommendations
- veto the proposed precept. This requires a majority of at least two thirds of the membership of the panel at that time, not just of those attending the meeting. A lack of a quorum would prevent the panel from using the veto, even if it wanted to do so.

The commissioner must have regard to the panel's report (including any recommendations) and must give the panel (and publish) a response to its report and recommendations.

The commissioner may then publish and put in place the precept if the panel does not use the veto. If the panel does exercise the veto, the commissioner will need to demonstrate that further consideration has been given to this decision before bringing a second proposal. As noted above, the panel may not veto a second proposal.

Exercising the veto

Panels have the power of veto over the precept. However, this a longstop, use of which should be very rare and needs to be justified. Panels should also recognise that the veto can only act as a delay; it will not prevent the commissioner from being able to re-present, and enact, a precept that is not materially different from that to which the veto has been applied.

In reality, close liaison between the panel and its commissioner in the run-up to the budget and precept being presented will limit the scope and reason for its use. Where the panel considers that the use of the veto is in prospect, professional advice should be taken from the host authority and prior engagement with the commissioner should be sought.

If the veto is used, the panel should be prepared to provide detailed reasoning to back up why; for example, the panel considers that the precept is:

- not supported by the evidence and information that the commissioner has provided
- too high, in which case the revised precept shall be lower than the previously proposed precept
- too low, in which case the revised precept shall be higher than the previously proposed precept.

It is useful to keep a reserve date in the panel's calendar in case a veto is agreed, because the precept needs to be reconsidered by the panel and a response by the commissioner issued before 15 February.

Following this, if the panel fails to make a second report to the commissioner by 22 February, the commissioner may issue the revised precept. Rejection of the revised precept by the panel does not prevent the commissioner from issuing it as the panel is unable to veto a further proposal.

Timeline for the panel's statutory responsibility as a consultee on the commissioner's precept

- ▶ **By 1 February**
Commissioner must notify the panel of her/his proposed precept.
- ▶ **By 8 February**
Panel must review it and make a report to the commissioner on the proposed precept, whether it vetoes the precept or not.
- ▶ **By 15 February**
Where the panel vetoes the precept, the commissioner must have regard to and respond to the panel's report and publish her/his response, including the revised precept.
- ▶ **By 22 February**
Panel, on receipt of a response from the commissioner notifying it of her/his revised precept, must review the revised precept and make a second report to the commissioner.
- ▶ **By 1 March**
Commissioner must have regard to and respond to the panel's second report and publish her/his response and the final precept.

Reviewing the police and crime plan

Following her/his election, a commissioner must issue a police and crime plan within the financial year in which each ordinary election is held. The plan is a high level, strategic document – not one that covers the detail of operational policing. The plan provides a means by which the chief constable can be held to account by the commissioner for

delivery against those objectives. The police and crime plan can be reviewed at any time – not just on an annual basis – although in practice most commissioners review them annually.

The plan should set out the following:

- the commissioner's police and crime objectives
- the policing that the chief constable is to provide
- the financial and other resources which the commissioner is to provide to the chief constable to exercise their functions
- the means by which the chief constable will report to the commissioner on the provision of policing
- the means by which the chief constable's performance in providing policing will be measured
- the crime and disorder reduction grants which the commissioner is to make, and the conditions (if any) to which such grants are to be made.

The Home Secretary may also give guidance to commissioners about issues to be included in the plan. For example, the plan will need to reflect local priorities in relation to the strategic policing requirements.

Themes for the panel to consider in scrutinising the plan

The panel has a statutory duty to be consulted on, and scrutinise, the plan and should be consulted by the commissioner when the plan is being reviewed. The panel might explore how the draft plan reflects assessments of local needs and could expect to be able to access, review and understand background information and evidence that has informed the plan in a timely way. The panel will also want to consider the commissioner's local police and crime objectives and the resourcing that will be put in place to deliver them.

Consideration should be given to the commissioner's grant-making for crime and disorder reduction and the commissioning of victims' services.

The panel may also be interested in whether the commissioner makes provision for collaboration with other commissioners or other forms of partnership working. However, its scrutiny role should only relate to its commissioner's governance role in relation to the force's local contribution to delivery of regional or national arrangements. Panels should not scrutinise activity which has taken place in other force areas or has been coordinated on behalf of other areas, other than where it affects delivery of the police and crime plan or proposed precept and reflects a decision of its own commissioner within the force area.

The panel might also scrutinise the commissioner's consultation on the plan and the communication strategies to promote it, as well as the partnerships that the commissioner develops to ensure delivery of the plan. As the panel's work sits within a wider consultation process by the commissioner on the plan, it might want to test the views of the public against the perceptions of the commissioner. In this, members may draw on their experiences as local councillors, within the community or within the public sector.

The panel will need to request the commissioner's attendance to present the police and crime plan at a formal meeting which is held in public, and subsequent revisions to it, in its role as a statutory consultee. It will be able to ask questions of the commissioner and to make a report on the plan.

Panels are also able to make recommendations for priorities in the plan, on performance measures to be used around delivery of the plan and for improvements in services to meet the commissioner's objectives. Scrutiny of the police and crime plan should not therefore merely be a 'sign off' by the panel for publication, but instead an opportunity to scrutinise the commissioner

and to discuss key issues and options. This approach, when also informed by in-year briefings and proactive work, will enable the panel to more effectively add value to consideration of the plan, rather than come late to a debate that has already concluded.

In 2017, a commissioner presented a new plan with four priorities. The panel was concerned about a lack of focus and priority for neighbourhood policing and following lengthy discussions and deliberations, the commissioner agreed to add neighbourhood policing as a fifth priority. It remains as a priority following a review and variation of the plan in 2019.

Over the course of the term, the panel should see the plan in the context of the commissioner's annual reports and how s/he is delivering on the priorities, as well as in relation to the annual accounts and level of the precept(s). This allows the panel to assess priorities against need and resource projections and to review performance against priorities and resource allocations. It also should provide a mechanism by which the panel can define and develop its own annual work programme.

Reviewing the annual report

The commissioner is required to publish an annual report. This should provide details of activity and achievements throughout the previous year against the priorities set out in the police and crime plan. The panel has a statutory role in scrutinising this report at a meeting held in public.

It is helpful for the panel to discuss its expectations of the annual report and the arrangements for how it might be considered with the commissioner and her/his office. For the annual report to be constructive and the panel's scrutiny of it effective, there needs to be recognition of the role the report and the public meeting can play in development and improvement.

It should not be viewed merely as a tick box exercise to comply with statutory requirements, but as a valuable tool, focused on outcomes, that benefits from collaboration between the panel, the commissioner and her/his office in the interests of improving policing, increasing community safety and reducing crime.

The annual report should have enough detail to allow the panel to have a detailed discussion of:

- the state of the force (and service) and the state of policing and crime (and fire and rescue) in the area
- performance and outcomes against priorities and budgets
- the role carried out by the commissioner.

The panel will need to have enough detail to fulfil its role and to ensure that the time available is used to best effect for the panel, the commissioner, her/his office and the public. The public meeting should come at the end of this process of exploration and should not be the first time that a panel sees the commissioner's annual report.

The public meeting of the panel to carry out this scrutiny of the annual report will need to be convened as soon as possible after it has been published. Panels might need to consider the best time to hold the review of the annual report in the final year of a commissioner's term of office. The March meeting may be too early because the annual report may not be available then, or it could be too close to the election period. However, reviewing the annual report after the election could be difficult if a new commissioner has been elected.

Scrutiny of the annual report should focus on:

- understanding whether the objectives set out in the police and crime plan have been met
- using panel members' own insight and independently gathered evidence to evaluate whether the commissioner's conclusions on this matter are robust and
- supporting the commissioner to hold the

chief constable to account on operational delivery.

An effective panel annual report session should use the report as a tool to carry out an annual review of the commissioner's activities, looking back at the last year's successes and challenges, and forward to the next year's opportunities and priorities.

A less beneficial session could involve the panel highlighting apparent factual inaccuracies in the annual report, asking for additional narrative information on details or pointing out typographical or grammatical errors. None of these would add value to the effective scrutiny of the commissioner and all of them would represent a poor use of time for everyone involved.

Scrutiny café-style meeting on the annual report

The panel is responsible for holding this public meeting to receive and discuss the commissioner's annual report each year and might use this for more creative ways to engage the public. It helps to publicise the meetings more widely and to explain the contribution a member of the public might make – and how.

Those familiar with local authority scrutiny might find a scrutiny café-style activity helpful. This enables a range of stakeholders to meet in an informal setting using group work to test opinion and share experience and insights. Using such an approach would enable a panel to better involve the public, for example, by inviting them to:

- comment on matters in the annual report
- express concerns about policing and crime (and fire and rescue services) in the presence of the commissioner
- provide ideas to inform the panel's work programme.

Holding confirmation hearings

Panel role in senior appointments

The panel has powers to review the commissioner's proposed appointment of senior staff before they are confirmed in post.² Under schedule 1 of the Act, the panel's role begins once the formal appointment process has concluded, but is limited to confirming an appointment. However, the panel also has powers to appoint an acting commissioner from among the deputy commissioner or the commissioner's staff, where the commissioner resigns or is incapacitated or is suspended from office by the panel. Arrangements for such an appointment are set out in legislation.

The senior appointments to be confirmed by the panel are:

- deputy commissioner, where appointed
- chief constable
- chief executive of the commissioner's office
- chief finance officer of the commissioner's office
- chief fire officer, in the case of a police, fire and crime commissioner.

The panel is required to hold confirmation hearings for these posts (regardless of how robust they consider the appointment process to have been), and make a report to the commissioner. This must include a recommendation as to whether or not the candidate should be appointed. The panel must also respond to and make a recommendation relating to any proposal by the commissioner to call upon the chief constable or chief fire officer to retire or resign.

Preparing for and holding a confirmation hearing

Panels should aim to complement the internal systems for appointing staff rather than duplicate or restage the interviews. The panel will need to be satisfied with the integrity and independence of the appointments process,

² The procedure differs where mayoral arrangements are in place and the executive mayor is also the commissioner.

and its role might also be to ensure that the procedure has been fair and properly conducted. The panel might take an interest in whether there has been more than one candidate for the post and if not, the reasons why. However, the panel's responsibility is only to hold a confirmation hearing for the nominee to the post.

One panel invited the Independent Member from the College of Policing to attend a hearing to explain how the commissioner and his office conducted the recruitment process for a chief constable; this provided much added value and triangulation. Other panels have sent a member as an informal observer of the recruitment process to give reassurance on appropriate practice by the commissioner and her/his office.

Professional advice might need to be taken by panels on how hearings will be managed. As well as the support officer, the panel might benefit from the advice of a monitoring officer or senior human resources officer in relation to specialist or technical information about recruitment, appointment and other employment issues, subject to resources being available to support additional officer time. This would ensure that panels conduct a fair process.

The panel must undertake its role in relation to confirmation hearings for the chief constable³ within three weeks, including notice of the need to meet, the hearing and the presentation of a report and possible recommendations. Usually no other business should be undertaken within that meeting. The confirmation hearing should not be another agenda item tacked on to an existing meeting, although the panel might choose to meet on the same day to conduct ordinary business with a separate agenda. The convening of a separate meeting will mean that proper time and preparation will be put in to the exercise and panel members will be able to approach the session with the right mindset.

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/117480/pcp-chief-constable-scrutiny.pdf

Part of the preparation for the hearing will involve the panel's support officer liaising with the candidate around the logistics of attendance at the meeting and to provide general information about what the panel will expect from her/him on the day.

The way that candidates are questioned will need especially careful preparation. This is a public meeting and a candidate's appointment to a post with a public profile, involving significant responsibility, is at stake. Questions and questioning themes should be discussed in advance. There will be scope for supplementary questions, but the process and format will need to be more rigid than for a standard item on an agenda.

Preparing for confirmation hearings

As with all 'special functions', the panel will need to be fully prepared, in terms of the procedures to be followed; the approach to take; the reason for its involvement; information to be provided by others such as the commissioner and the commissioner's office; evidence to be gathered; liaison to be undertaken with the commissioner and others; and questions to be asked by the panel at the formal public session.

Legislation provides for panels to have access to:

- the name of the person whom the commissioner is proposing to appoint ('the candidate')
- the criteria used to assess the suitability of the candidate for the appointment
- the reasons the candidate satisfies those criteria
- the terms and conditions on which the candidate is to be appointed.

Panel members will be able to draw on this information in order to prepare their key lines of enquiry for the confirmation hearing and make a report. Preparation for the hearing could best be undertaken in a pre-

meeting for the panel to be briefed about and agree the process, and to develop the questioning strategy with key lines of enquiry.

The panel might become aware of additional information to that which is provided by the commissioner about the candidate, but must take care when researching, analysing and using other evidence that is in the public domain. An early pre-meeting would enable panels to address unexpected issues, for example, adverse, though not necessarily accurate, media coverage or identify any gaps in information that need to be covered.

Panels should follow a narrow set of key lines of enquiry. These should focus on the individual's capability and expertise, her/his professional competence and personal independence and her/his understanding of the commissioner's police and crime plan. Suitable questions should test the candidate's professional judgement and insights and whether s/he would feel able to act in a manner that is operationally independent of the commissioner but under her/his strategic direction.

The panel also will need to have regard to the police and crime plan and the suitability and expertise of the candidate in relation to delivery of these strategic objectives. The panel will need to assure itself that the candidate would be able to advise the commissioner effectively and understand the need to be held to account by the commissioner for the conduct of the role.

The panel might test the understanding of the candidate of the separation of the commissioner from operational responsibility. The panel also might scrutinise the candidate's understanding of the various stakeholders with whom s/he and the commissioner would need to work and demonstrate an ability to engage with them to develop and deliver the major strategy and outcomes sought.

Reviewing the appointment and making a recommendation

Following the hearing, the panel is required to review the proposed appointment; this deliberation takes place in private. The outcome is reported at the end of the confirmation hearing and the panel is required to publish the report of the confirmation hearing on its website and send copies to each of the local authorities. The panel chair is then required to write to the commissioner to report whether it recommends appointment or not.

In the case of the appointment of the chief constable (and chief fire officer) only, the panel has the power to veto the appointment, on the basis of a majority of two thirds of the membership of the whole panel (not only those present at the hearing). If the panel exercises its veto, the commissioner must not appoint that candidate for chief constable (or chief fire officer).

Therefore, such a veto would need to be accompanied by very clear reasons, on which the panel should take advice. The panel will need to realise that the exercise of a veto, in such an instance, could be potentially career-ending for the selected candidate; an exceptionally high bar should be assumed for the use of the veto to be appropriate.

For other appointments, the commissioner is required to notify the panel if s/he accepts or rejects its recommendation(s) but does not have to give reasons.

Deputy commissioner

The role of a deputy commissioner differs from the other appointments in that it is likely to be a political appointment and therefore less able to be tested in terms of professional judgement and expertise. It may also be an unpaid position, so further outside the scope of employment procedures.

However, the panel still need to assure themselves of the understanding by the candidate of her/his role, the position of

the commissioner and the operational independence of the chief constable (and chief fire officer).

Key lines of enquiry of the panel for a deputy commissioner might focus around her/his understanding of the commissioner's vision and priorities and the role that the deputy would play in support of the commissioner's strategy and delivery of the plan. The panel might also ask questions in relation to public engagement or other significant requirements to fulfil the role profile in the more political context of the deputy commissioner post.

Handling complaints

Panels have two roles in relation to complaints handling:

- scrutinising and supporting commissioners on their oversight of force complaints and the handling of a chief constable complaint, following reforms to the police complaints and disciplinary system, and
- a direct role in dealing with non-criminal complaints about the commissioner, one of their special functions.

Reform of complaints handling

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 provides for the overhaul of the police complaints and discipline systems, in line with the Home Office's stated view that 'PCC oversight and direct involvement in complaints handling provides an opportunity to gain powerful insights in how a local force operates and key concerns for members of the public'. When fully implemented, the reforms will see commissioners take on an enhanced role in the complaints system.

All commissioners will have an explicit statutory duty to hold the chief constable to account for the efficient and effective handling of complaints locally, and

they will take on responsibility for complaints' reviews (appeals), which are currently handled internally by forces. Commissioners will also be able to give notice to their chief constable that they will take on 'front-end' initial complaints handling, ie receiving and recording complaints (optional model 2), or take on initial complaints handling together with maintaining contact with the complainant throughout the process (optional model 3).

It is a decision of the commissioner in consultation with the chief constable whether to take one of the optional models – and if so, which one. Regulations will specify the steps a commissioner must take before giving notice to take on optional functions (including consultation on the proposed optional model) and to whom s/he can delegate her/his functions. Formal resolution of complaints will remain the responsibility of the chief constable as the head of the organisation about which complaints have been received.

The 2017 Act also provides for a system of police super-complaints. This reform came into effect on 1 November 2018 and enables organisations designated by the Home Secretary to raise concerns that a feature, or combination of features, of policing in England and Wales is, or appears to be, significantly harming the interests of the public. The super-complaint system is designed to bring systemic issues in policing to light that are not otherwise captured by the existing complaints system based around individual complaints. Super-complaints will be considered by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) the College of Policing and the Independent Office for Police Complaints who, together, will consider the matters raised and make recommendations as to what (if anything) needs to happen as a result of the super-complaint. The role of panels will be limited to scrutinising any national recommendations for the commissioner that come out of these.

Panels will need to be aware of the impact of changes effected by the 2017 Act. When complaints reforms are in place, this will include scrutinising the commissioner on the discharge of her/his functions in respect of complaints and super-complaints, the notification of them, her/his capacity to fulfil this new duty and any potential consultation on and extension of the commissioner's role to include either of the optional models. They will not have this role until the reforms are in place.

Panel complaints handling

Type of complaints

In terms of their own specific responsibility for complaints, regulations⁴ require panels to consider non-criminal complaints about the conduct of a commissioner and/or deputy commissioner, where appointed.

Complaints may refer to conduct matters including actions and omissions, statements or procedures, including the way decisions are taken. They do not include the merits of a decision with which a complainant may disagree, but only whether the decision was taken properly in accordance with procedures. Regulations divide complaints into:

- complaints – conduct of the commissioner or deputy commissioner
- serious complaints – allegation the commissioner or deputy commissioner has committed a criminal offence
- conduct matter – indication that the commissioner or deputy commissioner may have committed a criminal offence, which has come to light other than through a complaint.

Panels must refer serious complaints and conduct matters to the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

Options for dealing with complaints

It is for panels to decide how to handle their complaints function. Options include:

- work undertaken by a complaints sub-committee of the panel that reports to the panel
- delegation of the first sift of the complaint by the chief executive of the commissioner's office, possibly in the presence of a representative of the panel
- delegation of the informal resolution of the complaint.

There should be clear procedures illustrated by a flowchart with clear timescales, a form for submitting and outlining a complaint, definitions of complaints including vexatious complaints and information about routes for complaints that are not the responsibility of panels. These should be accessible to the public, including on the panel's website. These procedures should reassure the public that complaints against the commissioner or deputy are handled fairly and appropriately by the panel or referred to the proper body.

Complaints should where possible be acknowledged within five working days and conducted within forty working days (eight weeks) if dealt with through the informal resolution process.

There is a duty to record the complaint or to state reasons why it was not recorded, or other action taken, and to obtain and preserve evidence. If a complaint is recorded, the complainant and the commissioner or deputy commissioner will be provided with a copy of the record of the complaint, if necessary with redaction to protect the identity of the complainant or any other person, unless this might prejudice a criminal investigation or not be in the public interest.

4 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/62/contents/made

Three options are then available to the panel:

- to refer a serious complaint or conduct matter to the IOPC
- to refer the complaint to the panel or its complaints sub-committee for informal resolution
- to take no action.

A panel may choose not to refer the complaint for resolution nor take action if:

- it does not relate to the actions or statutory responsibilities of the commissioner or deputy commissioner
- the complaint is by a member of the commissioner or deputy commissioner's staff arising from their work
- it is more than 12 months old and there is no apparent good reason for the delay or the delay would cause injustice
- it is already the subject of another complaint
- it is anonymous
- it is vexatious or another abuse of the procedures for complaints
- it is repetitious
- it has been resolved before it comes to the panel's attention.

A complainant can withdraw or discontinue their complaint at any time by notifying the panel in writing with the person's signature and the commissioner or deputy commissioner must be informed. A record of all complaints received should be kept until 12 months after the commissioner or deputy commissioner leaves the post.

Managing complaints and challenge for panels

Many panels (and their host authorities especially) have found complaints handling to be very difficult because they are not responsible for and cannot investigate complaints, yet are expected to encourage

or facilitate informal resolution. Informal resolution is intended to enable the matter to be solved or explained directly with the complainant without an investigation or formal proceeding, and there are no sanctions available. As a result, there has been a seemingly disproportionate amount of time and resources spent on complaints handling.

The panel needs to have information in order to come to a judgement about the action to take. This could require clarification through a meeting with the commissioner, or deputy commissioner if the subject of the complaint.

The support officer or another officer (eg the local authority's monitoring officer) must write to the complainant setting out the procedure and timescales and giving the complainant and the commissioner or deputy commissioner the opportunity to make further written comments about the complaint within a set timescale. The panel has the power to require the commissioner or deputy commissioner to provide information and documents and to answer questions, but not to conduct an investigation by taking statements from others.

The complainant and the commissioner or deputy commissioner with the chief executive or another member of her/his office may be invited to a meeting in private but may only speak at the discretion of the chair.

The panel will consider whether the complaint has been dealt with satisfactorily and been resolved or what course of action is required. This might be an explanation or agreement on how to move forward after mediation. The decision of the panel is to be recorded and notified to the complainant, the commissioner or deputy commissioner, the support officer and the chief executive of the commissioner's office.

There is no right of appeal, but complaints about the process may be submitted to the

support officer or chair of the panel with the option to refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman if a satisfactory answer is not considered to have been made.

In reporting about complaints about the commissioner or deputy commissioner, it is appropriate for the panel to report on the number of such complaints and how they have been dealt with, but not provide details of the resolution of individual complaints, for example, in order to protect personal information.

Wider activity to support panels' functions around the discharge of the commissioner's functions

Whilst there is no statutory duty to undertake proactive work, panels may choose to undertake activity in addition to their special functions in order to consider more fully how the commissioner discharges her/his functions, and to inform their statutory work. Panels which undertake such proactive work and additional research are likely to provide more effective challenge and support for their commissioner because they are able to gain greater insight and understanding of the strategic policing landscape in the local area.

What 'proactive' work will look and feel like

The precise nature of this proactive work and how it engages with the commissioner's decision-making and policy cycle is best decided at local level and subject to discussion between the commissioner and the panel. However, it needs to focus on the work of the commissioner, reflect the capacity of members and officers and enhance the effectiveness of the panel in meeting its statutory duties.

Proactive work is likely to look and feel different from the scrutiny, and constructive challenge, of commissioner performance and decisions that have already been made. Whilst it is important to learn lessons through

reviewing how decisions have been made or the impact of policies and actions, proactive work connects more to a panel's supportive role and should be seen by panels and commissioners as an opportunity to liaise in order to expand and develop the evidence base that feeds into the decision-making process.

Building a broader evidence base to support the panel's 'special functions'

This exploratory work of evidence-gathering and thematic investigations enables members to build their knowledge of complex, cross-cutting issues in a way that would be impossible solely through a report submitted by the commissioner or her/his office or background research by an officer supporting the panel. This broader evidence base, once at the panel's disposal, ensures that when a panel considers the draft precept or is consulted about a refresh of the plan(s), it has a better understanding of the policing (and fire and rescue) needs of the area, the opportunities afforded by partners to deliver services and the impact of the plans of the commissioner. The greater knowledge of the panel also allows its members to ask more reasonable and searching questions of the commissioner and to provide meaningful feedback as part of any of the consultation processes, or formal consideration of key agenda items. This information may provide additional insight to the commissioner during meetings with the panel and/or the chief constable.

Understanding issues in her/his local area, including crime and disorder matters, is already part of the role of a councillor and these insights could constructively feed into the panel's deliberations. However, it is important to balance the risk around members of the public and complainants seeking to abuse the trust of councillors in attempts to circumvent normal operational policing arrangements in respect of individual concerns.

An explanation of what this proactive activity by a panel will mean for the commissioner/panel relationship (and potentially, the

relationship with other partners) should be a feature of any memorandum of understanding/protocol that is developed locally.

Given the panel's specific power to make recommendations to the commissioner on matters relating to the discharge of her/his functions, it is helpful for the panel to be well informed and better able to ask pertinent questions, evaluate the information received and formulate suggestions. The detail of how the commissioner should respond to these recommendations will be subject to local agreement, and based on similar principles for overview and scrutiny in local government with respect to events at committee, inquiry days or task and finish groups. This is expanded on in section four on running the panel.

Without effective prioritisation and a sense of focus and direction, not least from chairs and support officers, there is a risk that proactive work could be resource-intensive and add little value. However, panels that are using their resources fully, making effective use of their Home Office grant and which have clear procedures and criteria for prioritisation of their workload, should be able to undertake the routine challenge and support of the commissioner at panel meetings, fulfil their special functions and undertake more proactive work better to inform their work. This is considered in more detail in section four below.

Section three: Key stakeholders in undertaking the panel's functions

As outlined in section one, the policing protocol sets out the relationships between the commissioner, the panel and the chief constable. In fulfilling its remit, a panel will need to build relationships with the commissioner and her/his office. Commissioners and their offices will need to understand and commit to their role in facilitating panels' activities, and for this reason a memorandum of understanding or protocol between these two partners may be helpful.

A panel might also need to liaise with a wide range of stakeholders across policing and crime (fire and rescue) to inform its work. Depending on capacity and the approach taken by the panel, this could involve briefings and evidence gathering with and from a wide range of organisations to support the work of the panel in providing challenge and support of the commissioner.

The table below summarises the respective roles of panels, commissioners and chief constables in relation to their key functions.

Commissioner	Panel	Chief Constable
Secures the maintenance of the police force for that area and ensures that the police force is efficient and effective	Scrutinises the commissioner and supports the commissioner in the effective exercise of her/his functions	Responsible for maintaining the Queen's Peace; held to account by the PCC Has regard to the strategic policing requirement when exercising and planning policing functions in respect of their force's national and international policing responsibilities
Sets the budget and precept for the force	Reviews the precept (and by extension considers the budget)	Has direction and control over the force's officers and staff, and associated budgets
Establishes local priorities for the force through a police and crime plan	Contributes to the development of the commissioner's police and crime plan	Is accountable to the law for the exercise of police powers, and to the commissioner for the delivery of efficient and effective policing, management of resources and expenditure by the police force

Commissioner	Panel	Chief Constable
Holds the chief constable to account for the exercise of her/his functions and those under her/his direction and control	Scrutinises, challenges and supports the PCC	Supports the commissioner in the delivery of the strategy and objectives set out in the plan; assists the commissioner in planning the force's budget; and provides the commissioner with access to information, officers and staff as required
Uses her/his powers to appoint, reappoint and/or dismiss the chief constable	Carries out confirmation hearings for chief constables (and other key roles) Scrutinises the PCC, and receives evidence from the chief constable (by invitation), at 'set piece' events at certain points in the year	
Publishes information specified by the Secretary of State and information that the commissioner considers necessary to enable the people who live in the force areas to assess the performance of the commissioner and the chief constable	Promotes openness in the transaction of police business Uses information to carry out its special functions (the statutory requirements around the precept, police and crime plan, annual report, confirmation hearings and complaints)	Is the operational voice of policing in the force area and regularly explains to the public the operational actions of officers and staff under her/his command
Monitors complaints made against police officers and staff, whilst having responsibility for complaints made against the chief constable	Uses insight from complaints data to inform how its special functions are carried out	Responsible for professional standards for police officers and staff
May enter into collaboration agreements (in consultation with the chief constable) between other commissioners and forces where it would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of one or more forces	May consider such collaboration agreements given that they are likely to intersect with the panel's functions, and may work with other panels to carry out these responsibilities where proportionate and necessary to scrutinise the relevant commissioner	Enters into collaboration agreements with other chief constables, other policing bodies and partners that improve the efficiency or effectiveness of policing, and with the agreement of their respective policing bodies

The relationship with the commissioner

The panel's relationship with the commissioner is its principal relationship. It is defined by the statutory responsibility to provide both 'challenge' of and 'support' to the commissioner. The panel has a strategic role in relation to the totality of policing in the force area.

This relationship will be reflected in the terms of reference and rules of procedure of the panel. However, the panel and commissioner may consider that a memorandum of understanding or protocol to set out mutual expectations would be useful to clarify their ways of working together. This provides a way to reflect the legislative duties and value-added activity and to set out in more detail how these duties will be undertaken locally.

Such a protocol may form part of the panel arrangements, which are likely to contain detail on the above, as set out in section four. It might include:

- The general principles that the panel will adopt in carrying out its work including the Nolan Principles of public life and the mutual expectations in terms of behaviour that will define the relationship; the commissioner and members of the panel all have obligations to comply with the code of conduct and the register and declaration of interests.
- The principal tasks that the panel expects to carry out.
- The way that the panel's work will provide both challenge and support to the commissioner.
- The way that the panel will carry out its proactive work, including work programming arrangements.
- The way that the panel and commissioner will manage the making of recommendations and the submission of responses to recommendations.
- Arrangements for attendance at meetings and the timely provision on request of information held by the commissioner.

- Expectations around the panel's engagement with other partners and organisations, particularly insofar as this is necessary for the panel to conduct its statutory duties.

A strong and well-understood explanation of what 'challenge' and 'support' mean will be an important element of any protocol. These words, and the associated word, 'scrutiny', have particular meanings in respect of the work of panels, informed by the way those words are used in legislation. Together, they encompass the panel's statutory scrutiny tasks (relating to the precept, the budget, the police and crime plan and so on) as well as the wider duties of panels to contribute to PCCs' work by contributing to policy development and understanding the context in which PCCs operate, the better to conduct their statutory tasks.

Scrutiny practitioners with a background in local government, officers and councillors included, will need to be aware that they and OPCCs (and other relevant partners) will need to have a very clear expectation of exactly what 'challenge', 'scrutiny' and 'support' mean in this context, and in particular that colleagues in strategic policing may use or understand the word 'scrutiny' differently to those with a local government background. This is about more than semantics; as well as ensuring that panels demonstrate that they are having due regard to the legislation in how they explain and plan their work, it is also about ensuring that the opportunity for confusion and misunderstanding is minimised, and about PCCs having an associated clarity about their specific duties and responsibilities with regard to panel operations

The panel should be recognised as having significant influence through these roles of challenge and support and in particular the scrutiny activities relating to the 'special functions'. This may be enhanced significantly where the right culture exists and where commissioners are open to effective working with their panels and where members focus their activity on the commissioner's strategic priorities.

Operational independence

The separation of strategic and operational matters is fundamental to policing governance but is not always clear or understood (nor easy to apply). Operational independence has been and continues to be safeguarded for policing professionals and reduces the risk of the politicisation of policing, whatever the model of governance.

Commissioners do not manage the day to day operations of the force (nor the fire service in the case of PFCCs). The chief constable (and chief fire officer) retain(s) the direction and control of the officers and staff of the force (and service). The chief constable (and chief fire officer) are responsible for the deployment of officers and operational decisions within the context of the commissioner's plan(s), for the delivery of which they are held to account by the commissioner.

Knowing what is, and what is not, operational will impact on the way that the panel engages with the commissioner and the chief constable. This is expanded on in the section below.

The relationship with the chief constable

The policing protocol makes clear that the panel does not scrutinise the chief constable, but the commissioner. It is the role of the commissioner to hold to account the chief constable for the delivery of her/his functions. It will be important for the panel to have regard to that activity as this work is carried out, but the panel itself may not scrutinise nor seek to hold to account the chief constable.

The Home Office protocol envisages that panels may seek to scrutinise the commissioner on an operational matter that is relevant to their challenge and support of the commissioner and that under those circumstances the commissioner may ask the chief constable to attend alongside the commissioner to offer information and clarify issues. It is for the commissioner to decide whether the chief constable is 'needed' at a meeting, but on

occasion it may be decided that it would be valuable for the chief constable to attend and support the commissioner, including potentially answering questions. In the interests of clarity of role and function, such sessions will need careful planning.

Discussion of operational matters will be relevant as background information only insofar as they inform challenge and support on a specific, strategic issue into which the panel is looking in order to fulfil its statutory role. The first port of call when the panel thinks that understanding operational matters is necessary in order for it fully to fulfil its statutory role is to engage with the commissioner's office. There could be informal briefings and discussions as well as the formal meetings of the panel. Inevitably different panels, commissioners and others have different takes on the definition and scope of operational matters. The following examples are intended to be illustrative to guide local judgements.

The commissioner may ask the chief constable and the panel may invite but cannot require a relevant partner to give evidence on:

- how they are helping the commissioner to secure her/his strategic priorities
- how work that they are planning or delivering might impact on the commissioner's performance
- how decisions they are making or plan to make on resources may impact upon future iterations of the police and crime plan and the future police precept
- how they are delivering on funding or delivery agreements made with the commissioner.

In respect of operational matters, however, as we have noted above, scrutiny and questioning of the chief constable will be inappropriate. This will include:

- a decision whether, or whether not, to deploy police officers
- absolute discretion to investigate crimes and individuals
- the decision to make an arrest

- a decision taken with the purpose of balancing competing operational needs within the framework of priorities and objectives set by the commissioner
- a tactical operational decision to reallocate resources to meet immediate demand
- the allocation of officers' specific duties and responsibilities within the force area to meet the objectives set by the commissioner.

Examples of inappropriate questions that a panel should not ask a chief constable through the commissioner might be:

- Do you think that the strategic objectives in the police and crime plan are sensible?
- Why did you not deploy more officers to deal with the disorder experienced in the town at the end of last month?
- Why has the force been focusing so much of its attention on anti-social behaviour at the expense of issues such as domestic violence?

With rephrasing, these concerns could be addressed through questions to a commissioner in the context of plan priorities and the allocation of resources among different priorities.

Examples of more appropriate questions to the chief constable through the commissioner would be:

- How has the force taken steps to amend the way it works to help achieve the strategic objectives in the police and crime plan?
- Will the increase in the precept enable you and the chief constable to increase the capacity and capability of the force?
- What resources are available to you to deal with unexpected public order demands?
- What do you think the impact will be on the delivery of priorities in the plan of the decision to shift more operational resources towards dealing with anti-social behaviour?

Relationships with other local stakeholders

Panels will need to engage with local authorities in the force area, community safety partnerships, health bodies and others to inform their challenge of and support for their commissioners regarding the discharge of their functions, especially when reviewing the commissioner's precept, plan and annual report. This will include working closely with local authority committees⁵, including those that have the power to hold partners to account, for the panel to gather evidence and avoid duplication.

There is a wide range of partners that might help to build the knowledge base of the panel. These organisations and people must not be the subject of scrutiny by the panel but sources of evidence to support the panel's statutory functions.

Relevant partners for panels to engage with:

- chief constable and the force (chief fire officer and the service)
- office of the commissioner
- HMICFRS for force and service inspection data
- organisations in the criminal justice system
- other blue light services
- safer neighbourhood partnerships
- community safety partnerships
- local authority overview and scrutiny committees that cover crime and disorder
- health and wellbeing boards and public health teams in local authorities
- other local authority services including trading standards, youth offending service, highways, children's services and safeguarding boards

⁵ Or whatever committees at local level are designated by the authority concerned to carry out those duties, in authorities operating under committee system arrangements.

- in Wales, public services boards
- clinical commissioning groups and health trusts
- third sector organisations which deliver services commissioned by the commissioner
- residents and community groups
- users of services
- subject experts
- other panels for bench-marking and good practice.

Panels might consult these partners as witnesses at meetings, at site visits or through surveys. Panels might draw on their reports and research. There may be other ways for panels to engage with partners in order to be better informed and better able to fulfil their roles, and to use a broader evidence base in scrutinising the commissioner.

Panel scrutiny of collaboration

It is the stated ambition of the Government for force to force and multi-agency collaboration to increase. A panel will need to have an overview of the commissioner's collaboration in policing and crime and the criminal justice system, as well as in some cases with other blue light services, although they must remember that their legal remit relates only to their own commissioner.

Developing an overview of the commissioner's work may involve panels working with other panels in order to scrutinise collaborative work across forces. In doing so, care will need to be taken to ensure this does not result in quasi-formal joint panel activities, which could risk diluting individual panel's specific roles with respect to their own commissioner or be unwieldy and disproportionate. Panels may collaborate, but this should be focused on information sharing and enabling a panel to better scrutinise its own commissioner for her/his strategy and

around the cost, risks, benefits and outcomes from collaboration.

Effective liaison

Given this web of accountability within which the panels are located, in working with other people, agencies and organisations panels need to ensure their activity complements, rather than duplicates, that of others. Panels therefore need to ensure effective liaison and relationship building not only with their constituent local authorities, the commissioner and commissioner's office, but also with partners across the public sector and in the criminal justice system.

HMICFRS

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is an important partner in the governance landscape for strategic policing. HMICFRS is charged with carrying out independent assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency and leadership of police forces and fire and rescue services in the public interest. By gathering information, it promotes improvements in policing and fire and rescue services to make everyone safer.

As an inspectorate, not a regulator, the HMICFRS does not have powers of intervention, direction and enforcement. However, commissioners and chief constables are required to take action as a result of HMICFRS's recommendations. Commissioners are required to publish comments on each HMICFRS report within 56 days of its publication and to explain the steps to be taken in response to each HMICFRS recommendation or why no action has been or is to be taken in that respect.

Reports of the HMICFRS with regard to their force's area will be of interest to every panel in carrying out its roles of challenge and support of its commissioner. It is helpful for panels to work with their force's inspector and some panels invite her/him to meet with their members from time to time to inform their understanding and assist their scrutiny of the commissioner.

Section four:

Running the panel

Effective panel operation rests on clarity of role, proper prioritisation and sound use of resources. Panels' statutory duties require careful planning to fulfil. They rest on panel members carrying out work and background research in order to ensure that those statutory tasks are effectively managed. For these reasons, panel activities should in all events be justified by reference to those statutory duties, alongside a clear articulation of how the activity in question will directly contribute to those activities.

Panels have a grant at their disposal from the Home Office, the level of which has been set to match the commitment of resources necessary for panels to successfully carry out their statutory duties. Operating properly within this financial envelope requires panel members to challenge themselves and make choices about the priority and value of their work.

From inception, there was an expectation that panels could fulfil their roles within four meetings a year. Practice varies between panels but as a minimum, panels need to meet as often as required to fulfil the statutory duties of reviewing the proposed precept, the annual report and any refresh of the plan, as well as confirmation hearings and complaints handling as required. Where panels undertake further work in their roles of challenge and support, for example, through more proactive scrutiny of the discharge of any of the commissioner's functions, additional meetings may be held or work undertaken through informal task and finish groups.

Certain panel functions can be delegated (for example, the determination of complaints), but by and large formal activity must be conducted in panel meetings. However, panels may establish working groups and use other informal systems for information sharing and analysis to support their formal activity.

Calendar of meetings to fulfil the panel's statutory duties

Function	Timetable (if known)
Review precept(s)	Between 1-22 February
Review of police and crime plan (fire and rescue plan)	
Review of statement of assurance and integrated risk management plan (for PFCPS)	
Annual report	As soon as practicable after the panel receives it
Panel annual meeting, including the election of chair and vice chair	Annually
Confirmation hearings	Within three weeks of notification of a proposed appointment
Complaints (may be delegated)	Ideally to be resolved within 40 working days but acknowledged within five

Funding arrangements

The Home Office provides a grant for the purposes of maintaining a panel for each police force area, to enable it to carry out the functions and responsibilities set out in the Act. For the early PFCs, in light of the additional responsibilities, the Home Office has increased the grant for panels that had previously been spending their full grant. The amount available to panels is calculated to reflect the amount that panels are considered to need in order to be able to undertake their work effectively. The LGA encourages panels to draw on the funding available to enhance their effectiveness.

The grant is widely used mainly to cover the cost of a support officer plus the on-costs of the post. The Centre for Public Scrutiny's annual surveys of overview and scrutiny in local government (carried out regularly since 2007) have consistently demonstrated that the provision of dedicated scrutiny officer support is likely to offer the best opportunity for panels to use the grant to maximise their effectiveness. CfPS's 2015 annual survey provides the most comprehensive recent dataset to support this argument.⁶

Dedicated officers support enables panels to fulfil constructive roles in addition to the 'special functions' and to add greater value to policing, promoting community safety and tackling crime in the area in more proactive and evidenced ways.

Other uses of the grant are for ad hoc support from specialist officers, allowances (for independent members and in some panels the chair and members), travel costs, conferences and networking for learning and development.

The Home Office has been clear that the grant must not be spent by panels to:

- lobby the Government about panels, their roles and activities
- influence the award or renewal of contracts or grants, nor to

- attempt to influence legislation or regulation.

It is sensible for a panel to consider and agree its budget and to monitor the spend in-year, in consultation with the support officer, under the oversight of the host authority's s151 officer and monitoring officer. Comprehensive rules of procedure that set out arrangements for issues such as work programming and typical methods of panel operation, will provide assurance that spend and impact can be monitored properly.

Grant funds are paid in arrears and are distributed to the host authority in each force area, which must give an account of expenditure in claiming the funding. The monitoring officer and chief financial officer of the panel's host authority must satisfy themselves as to the accuracy of this account and should assure themselves that the Home Office's requirements and expectations are met (as notified in a letter to host authorities as part of the funding arrangements).

In England, there is provision in the Act for constituent local authorities to agree joint funding mechanisms to supplement this central resource with a joint pooled budget. Depending on the work programme of the panel (for example, the number of scrutiny investigations it carries out and in what depth it conducts its challenge and support of the commissioner), it may be helpful for the constituent councils to provide further support for the panel, although resource constraints may prevent this. In Wales, joint funding mechanisms are not allowed. Also, as policing is not devolved, host authorities in Wales cannot call on the other local authorities in their force area to 'top-up' the budget of the panel.

Panels and their constituent local authorities may also decide the remuneration that may be given to its members. This varies from panel to panel with some chairs being paid a special responsibility allowance and others not and with some panel members (in addition to independent members) being paid a basic allowance.

⁶ www.cfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Annual-Survey-2014-2015.pdf

These payments are at the discretion of the panel and its member local authorities but should reflect the work of members in comparison with other representative duties. The grant also covers expenses for members of the panel, for example, for travel.

Typical uses of the grant to support panels are to:

- Appoint a support officer for the panel to manage the function, carry out research and ensure there is effective liaison with the commissioner's office and others.
- Cover the time of specialist officers to support the panel from time to time such as committee clerks, communications officers, finance officers, human resources officers and legal officers from the host or other member authorities.
- Provide learning and development for the panel including through attendance at conferences and networks and in-house training.

Typical tasks of a panel support officer are to:

- help the panel to plan work
- prepare for meetings including agenda setting
- liaise with relevant colleagues
- assist the panel to carry out its statutory duties
- gather evidence in support of its duties
- help the panel to review information and carry out inquiries
- liaise with key partners including the commissioner's office
- support panel members' learning and development needs
- ensure the panel has a public profile

- maintain a dedicated panel website and use social media or liaise with the relevant communications officer for this
- ensure compliance with freedom of information requirements and general data protection regulations.

These tasks will vary according to capacity, for example, the number of hours worked and the other commitments the officer might have in the authority.

Panel arrangements

There are specific legislative provisions for how panels are constituted and run as set out in the 'panel arrangements' and 'rules of procedure' in schedule six of the Act. The following sections set out how these, and other factors, can contribute to the successful working of a panel.

Composition

Councillor membership

Each local authority in the force area is required to send a councillor to serve on the panel. Where there are ten or fewer local authorities, the number of councillors on the panel will be ten, plus two independent co-opted members. Where there are more than ten, there will be as many councillors as there are councils, plus the co-opted members. Additional councillors and lay members may be co-opted with Secretary of State approval, but the size of the panel must not exceed 20.

Composition should meet the balanced representation objective. Account should be taken of geographical and political balance in agreeing representation on the panel and according to the size of each local authority, some councils may have more than one representative.

Provision should be made for substitution and for the replacement of members, for example, when there is a change of political control in an authority that affects the political balance of the panel, or if there is a resignation. A few members changing across the local authorities within the police force area can necessitate change. It therefore is good practice proactively to review membership once a year as well as to be reactive to large-scale changes. Where a resignation takes place, the new member should be drawn from the same political group to maintain political balance; in the case of one or more changes in representation that affects political balance, membership of the panel overall needs to be reviewed to fulfil the political balance requirement.

In Wales, councils propose nominations to the host authority of the panel, who in turn submit details of the nominees to the Home Secretary to approve and appoint. In England, the appointment to the panel may be made at each council's Annual Meeting.

In mayoral and leader/cabinet authorities respectively the mayor or an executive member may be designated as an authority's representative on the panel. In practice, councils have tended to designate non-executive members to be their representatives. This gets round the potential problems around conflicts of interest where panels might be scrutinising strategic decision-making relating to local crime and disorder grant-making and decision-making in which the executive member has a direct stake. However, it is for the council to decide its representative.

Consideration should be given to appointing members for a four-year term unless there is a valid reason to review the appointments more frequently. This enables members to develop knowledge and build up expertise, and would address a significant challenge for panels in terms of the regular turnover of membership. However, local authorities that have a cycle of all out elections every four years or have

a stable political control may be better placed than other councils to appoint for four years.

Skills and expertise

It is helpful for the councillors nominated to serve on the panel to have relevant knowledge or experience and to make a commitment to participating fully in the panel's work. The panel might find it helpful to set out its expectations of local authority representatives in order to maximise the commitment, expertise and networking of its membership.

A skills audit helps a support officer to identify the knowledge, skills and experience of members that are relevant to the work of a panel and an annual refresh of the panel helps members to consider its priorities and capacity.

Given the additional responsibility of police, fire and crime panels for scrutiny of their police, fire and crime commissioner, the Home Office expects those panels to ensure they include the necessary expertise on fire and rescue services. This could be achieved by additional learning and development for existing members and/or through co-options from the outgoing fire authority or a refresh of membership where essential.

Independent members

Panels also benefit from the insights of at least two independent members, who are co-opted to bring skills, expertise and experience as lay members to assist the panel in the discharge of its functions. Widespread publicity and an information pack clearly setting out the role and the profile of people who could assist the panel can assist recruitment and create a larger pool from which to select the co-opted members. The recruitment procedures should be fair and transparent with a role profile being made available, public advertisement of the role and interviews.

The Home Secretary has reserve powers if the composition of the panel cannot be agreed at the force level.

Rules of procedure

Rules of procedure must comprise arrangements relating to panel chairing and may additionally comprise:

- a memorandum of understanding and protocol between the commissioner and panel
- information on resourcing, allowances and funding arrangements
- communications and arrangements for panel members to report back to their own local authorities
- arrangements for training and development for panel members
- detailed provisions covering:
 - how the panel will undertake its 'special functions'
 - work programming
 - running meetings (including arrangements for quorums)
 - responses by the commissioner to recommendations from the panel
 - methods available to carry out scrutiny work such as task and finish groups
 - evidence gathering and use of information
 - engagement with the public.

It makes sense for panels to take the opportunity in their rules of procedure to lay out information about their methods of operation because:

- this clarity will help the commissioner/panel relationship
- it will assist panels themselves to discuss and agree their methods of day-to-day operation
- it will make it more straightforward for panels, and other bodies, to assure themselves that they are undertaking their statutory duties effectively
- it will make it easier for panels to provide assurance to themselves (and to the Home Office) that their grants are being used appropriately.

Chairing

The panel will need to appoint a chair and vice-chair. It is a local decision as to whether to draw from its full membership rather than only from councillors on the panel in appointing a chair, but it would be a more open system to appoint either a councillor or an independent member.

The chair has an important role in the effective operation of the panel and will need to work closely with the support officer and build sound relationships with the commissioner. The chair might share responsibility for agenda setting and for assisting with arrangements for the special functions as well as driving the work programme. The chair will need to manage meetings effectively and provide leadership to the work of the panel, including potentially acting as its spokesperson and public face.

Panel meetings

The main activity of the panel will be at its formal calendared meetings, summarised above, although other methods also exist for panels to provide challenge of and support to commissioners, as set out below.

Panel meetings checklist:

- always set objectives and seek to achieve outcomes, including potential recommendations to the commissioner
- enable effective liaison and communication with the commissioner and her/his office
- always enable scrutiny of the commissioner
- enable the panel to stay informed and focused on timely and significant matters around local policing (and fire and safety)
- include the transaction of statutory business as required or within a separate agenda on the same day if a confirmation hearing
- enable the gathering of insights and evidence from partners, the public and other witnesses as appropriate

- always include the development or refresh of the work programme of the panel.

Agenda setting

Agenda setting is usually undertaken by the chair, vice-chair and support officer in consultation with the commissioner's office. This should form an integral part of the wider work programming process. It allows the chair and others to prepare for meetings by considering how an issue or discussion ought to be framed and by identifying questioning themes in order to ensure that the panel engages properly with its statutory duties. It will usually be appropriate for this preparation to involve the commissioner and/or her/his office, to ensure that s/he is prepared to address the points that the panel wishes to raise. The commissioner might take this opportunity to suggest refinements or changes to the panel's approach in order to ensure that the discussion adds as much value as possible. Of course, the final decision on how to proceed sits with the panel itself.

Pre-meetings

Many panels find a pre-meeting before the panel meeting to be helpful. Members are encouraged to attend and as they rarely see each other, it is a good opportunity for the chair or support officer to share information and air issues, as well as for the panel to review the agenda papers and prepare for the meeting. Without debating matters to be the subject of the meeting, it ensures that members do not go into a panel meeting 'cold'; have been briefed about logistics including anticipated attendees; have identified shared objectives and perceived outcomes; and are able to discuss and co-ordinate key lines of enquiry into a questioning plan for more effective challenge and support of the commissioner.

Each panel session – whether it is considering a general policy matter, a specific performance issue or one of the panel's statutory functions – will need to be undertaken with the objective of making substantive recommendations on issues. It should also add tangible value to the delivery of the commissioner's plan(s) across

the force (and service) area. The notion of adding value must be central to all the panel's activities.

Opportunities from formal panel meetings that are open to the public are to:

- receive an update from the commissioner in public
- scrutinise the commissioner through questioning and comment
- receive written reports or verbal updates, usually from the commissioner or her/his office
- receive written or oral evidence from partners and the public, possibly through public question time.

Commissioner attendance

A commissioner may be summoned by the panel to present a regular report, to speak about substantive policy issues or to answer questions on a specific agenda item. The commissioner (but not the chief constable) is required to attend. However, the commissioner is not obliged to attend for all the meeting but may wish to do so, according to the agenda.

Areas of interest that are informed by panel members experience or expertise might include:

- the commissioner's specific priorities under one or more aspects of the police and crime plan (and fire and rescue strategy)
- the way in which a commissioner is, or is not, working with partners to deliver the strategy, the plan, resources, a specific policy or a national initiative
- the volume, trends and prevalence of a specific crime across the force area or within certain parts of the area.

Where the panel undertakes work that a commissioner has suggested, it needs to be carried out in an independent, timely and constructive manner with clear objectives and achievable outcomes.

Specific considerations for police, fire and crime panels

Agendas for police, fire and crime panels need additional consideration. Policing and fire and rescue business may form distinct sections of the agenda for specific purposes, but there will also be a need for agenda items that scrutinise the PFCC's roles across the force and service, given that the combined role is designed to enhance blue light collaboration. Agenda items for a police, fire and crime panel may also include a review of the statement of assurance and the integrated risk management plan.

Communications and panel reporting

It is important for panels to establish mechanisms for members to report back to the councils that they represent. This could be in the form of verbal reports at full council meetings on a regular basis or only when there are specific matters to share. Alternatively, a panel could prepare a written report to be submitted to each council for wider communication.

A successful practice is for a panel to communicate 'key messages' immediately after each meeting and in advance of the minutes, so that partners and the public are immediately made aware of the outcomes of a meeting.

Annual or occasional attendance by a panel chair or other representative at meetings of the community safety partnerships or crime and disorder scrutiny in the force area are another effective way to share information and receive feedback and insights about policing and crime (and fire and rescue). Equally it is important for member councils and community safety partnerships to feed in their activity or concerns to inform the panel about matters for scrutiny or to provide evidence to use in its work.

Panel training and development

Panels need to be clear about the purpose of their role and the objectives of each activity so that they can identify and if necessary build their capacity. As noted, a short skills audit can help to identify existing expertise and experience, enabling a support officer to identify any gaps among the membership that might be addressed through learning and development.

It is essential that new members receive induction and, possibly, a mentor or buddy to support them in the early days of their roles on the panel. Panels should also undergo ongoing training to keep up to date with developments at a national, regional and force (service) level. This includes annual reviews and a refresh on their powers and responsibilities. This enables panels to look at their ways of working and the potential development of their activity and resourcing.

Panels may seek briefings from time to time on aspects of the force's strategies. Panels whose commissioner has taken on the fire and rescue service, will have briefings on the fire and rescue service, given the Panel will have new responsibilities relating to the commissioner's expanded role.

Panel chairs, support officers and other members of panels may find it helpful to attend national conferences and workshops, regional networks and/or occasional thematic seminars to broaden their outlook, compare their work with other panels and draw on good practice. The National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels has been established as a special interest group (SIG) of the LGA to provide sector-led development support for panels. It will provide learning and development and networking opportunities for panels to share good practice, address challenges and solve problems.

Work programming

Given the breadth of responsibilities of a commissioner, the number of policies within a police and crime plan, and the complexity of policing and criminal justice systems (and fire and rescue services), panels may often feel there is a long list of agenda items but not enough time to do anything in detail or as well as they would choose. A work programme helps a panel to plan its work to reflect the resources available and its capacity. It can be drawn up at the start of each municipal year and kept under review at panel meetings in order to improve prioritisation.

A work programme helps a panel to:

- evaluate issues which are and are not priorities
- manage its limited time and resources more effectively
- plan its routine business in the calendared cycle of meetings
- prepare for its regular special functions
- enable it to carry out value-added proactive activity such as evidence sessions and task and finish groups from time to time as capacity allows.

The work programme should be managed by the support officer of the panel in consultation with the chair and members. It needs to be flexible enough to provide time for ad hoc statutory meetings to fulfil special functions as required. For matters which arise during the year, the chair (in consultation) will need to decide whether topics raised for discussion by members of the panel and others should go on the agenda.

The use of relevant criteria should help a panel to prioritise topics. This could include how the investigation of certain topics will assist it in delivering its special functions and how such an investigation will provide challenge and support⁷ to the commissioner.

⁷ www.cfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfPS-Good-Scrutiny-Guidev2.pdf

Working with the commissioner's office

It is important for the panel to develop its work programme in conjunction with the commissioner's office, drawing on the commissioner's forward plan. This liaison enables the panel to focus on key matters in more timely ways with access to the necessary briefings and reports. It also ensures that enough time is built in for the panel to add value to its work through more in-depth scrutiny in addition to the special functions, if capacity allows.

Panels should communicate with the commissioner and her/his office to find out if there are any areas where assistance and support might be helpful. They also need to notify the commissioner's office of matters that will be on the agenda of a panel meeting where the commissioner's attendance would be required.

Work programming can add value by:

- Promoting openness and transparency to demonstrate what the panel is likely to be doing, allowing others to engage in that process.
- Ensuring that the panel keeps to strategic issues and focuses on the commissioner's activities and priorities in the plan.
- Providing the commissioner with a level of certainty and assurance, as s/he will know which issues the panel would like to raise with her/him and the topics it will be likely to investigate – why, how, where and when.
- Making it easier for the panel and other bodies to work together, minimising the duplication of work and providing a stronger evidence base for the panel.

Using evidence and information

To be more effective in their roles, panels will need to develop a detailed understanding of a range of issues connected to policing and crime (and fire and rescue if applicable) in the local area, drawing on their insights

as elected councillors or in the case of independent members, their expertise or experience in the field. This additional work, as background briefing or proactive activity, should focus on key issues or areas of particular concern or significance but should avoid duplication of the commissioner's own scrutiny and investigation work with the force.

Throughout the year the panel will need to be kept updated on the commissioner's performance in delivering, resourcing and achieving her/his priorities under the plan(s). This will support the panel in scrutinising the commissioner's annual report(s), enable it to better understand the strategic policing and crime (and fire and rescue) landscape, and ensure that it is able to offer the best possible informed support to the commissioner.

It will usually be unproductive for panels to spend time in formal meetings taking reports purely to note, instead they should gather information to explore a topic, perhaps a specific item in the police and crime plan. Information should also be shared outside meetings, perhaps in a digest prepared by the support officer and the commissioner's office, to allow issues of specific concern to be escalated to the panel for more rigorous study where the panel can most clearly exercise its challenge and support functions.

As well as reports from the commissioner and her/his office, panels might hear from organisations that may be funded by, or whose services are, commissioned by the commissioner as well as from members of the public. Relying exclusively on information produced by the commissioner is likely to be inadequate as panels will want to test ('triangulate') that information with other sources.

Gathering evidence and preparing for meetings will ensure that commissioner attendance will be targeted; that the commissioner can prepare in advance for items of which s/he has already been notified; and that substantive recommendations and actions can come out of each session.

Key sources of information for panels:

- police and crime plan
- delivery plans
- performance management information
- data analytics reports
- HMIRCS Integrated PEEL Assessments.

Other forms of evidence for panels:

- regular monitoring reports on the delivery of the police and crime plan (and fire safety plan), for example, by theme or plan objective
- regular financial and performance monitoring reports
- progress reports on key strategies of the commissioner, for example, estates, change programmes, victims' services commissioning
- one-off briefing on specific matters
- proactive in-depth research through evidence sessions, inquiry days, task and finish groups and site visits
- stakeholder events to meet with and hear from partners, providers, service users and the public
- regular training to better enable a panel to fulfil its statutory commitments and develop scrutiny activity
- learning and development for a panel when it takes on new duties relating to fire and rescue services or the new complaints procedures.

Member champions

One way in which some panels have increased capacity, developed expertise and spread the workload of information gathering amongst members is to agree member champion or rapporteur roles. These involve individual members of a panel having different responsibilities for developing and

maintaining a subject expertise in respect of specific areas of the commissioner's responsibility and the broader local policing landscape. This approach better supports the panel in fulfilling its statutory duties, particularly the duties relating to the precept and the police and crime plan.

For example, each member champion might hold responsibility for keeping up to date on a topic reflecting a specific issue or priority in the plan; this member may then lead on liaison with the commissioner's office and evidence gathering from relevant partner organisations, for example, those who are responsible for delivering services on behalf of the commissioner. The panel's support officer would of course need to facilitate this process in order to ensure that information and other requests were proportionate and not managed in an ad hoc or scattergun way.

Several commissioner's offices similarly spread the workload and identify a relevant link officer, for example, who covers an aspect of the police and crime plan, to liaise with a member champion to improve liaison, briefing, ideas for work planning and the timely sharing of information. This does not compromise or dilute the challenge to the commissioner but may enhance the support and scrutiny by ensuring better-informed panels and improving the focus and work planning of their activity.

This is one approach to building capacity which many panels have commended. Its adoption will depend upon local decisions about resourcing and ways of working to fulfil the panel's statutory functions most effectively. It is presented here as an illustration of one potential model for the management of information and insight available to panel members.

Benefits of member champions and link officers from the commissioner's office:

- to enable both to keep up to date with the commissioner's forward plan and the panel's work programme
- to prepare for meetings and evidence sessions

- to share and gather information
- to avoid surprises at meetings or through the media
- to monitor performance to identify items by exception for review and recommendation
- to keep the panel up to date with developments to feed in to its work
- to undertake horizon scanning.

Panels and public engagement

As councillors, most members of the panel are likely to already be active in their communities, seeking to understand the concerns and needs of their residents and listening to the public, whether users of a service or not. It is important to feed these insights into the panel's evidence sessions in order to paint a bigger picture of policing in the area, thus presenting trends and highlighting issues of significance across the force area.

There are two needs here – firstly, assurance that the business of the panel itself is visible to the public in general terms, and secondly ensuring that substantive panel work benefits, where appropriate, from public input and insight.

General visibility of panels and their business

The primary responsibility for engaging with the public over policing matters lies with the commissioner. As such it would be useful for the panel to discuss any potential public involvement with the commissioner or her/his office to ensure that the panel complements rather than duplicates existing or planned public engagement.

Given that panels are an integral part of the policing (and in some areas, fire and rescue) governance and accountability framework, it is important that they are visible. There has been mixed practice across panels in

terms of their public profile. Many rely on a page on the host authority's website and make documentation available through that council's committee management system. Others have developed their own website. All of the panels' websites are listed in the appendix to enable panels to review each other's communications tools, documentation, procedures and meetings.

It would be helpful for panels to develop a communications strategy encompassing public engagement, reporting, websites and social media. This might be carried out with assistance from specialist officers from the host authority, funded where necessary from the grant. This will enable panels to develop a higher public profile, which in turn could lead to greater engagement with, and awareness among, the public.

Good practice in the interests of transparency suggests that panels should develop their own websites with links from and to constituent authorities and the commissioner's site; web cast and/or audio-record their meetings; and have a social media presence including a twitter feed. These would alert members of the public to the panel's activities and encourage engagement in diverse ways, whether by giving evidence to inquiries or attending public meetings.

Some panels have published their own annual reports and many hold annual reviews for self-assessment and development of their work, which can serve to make that work more visible. They track recommendations in-year, evaluate the outcomes from the work programme and identify what has gone well and what they might usefully develop – and how.

Substantive involvement of the public in panels' activities

Panel meetings are held in public (though are not public meetings). Some panel meetings are for formal business, for example, to undertake special functions and may not necessarily be appropriate settings for public involvement and participation, though provision may be made for public questions and, at the discretion of chair, to allow others to participate.

However, as panel meetings must be held in public, properly managed, they could be opportunities for wider engagement. From time to time it could be appropriate for meetings of the panel to be more obviously public-facing, for example, the panel meeting held in public to review the annual report of the commissioner. Such meetings are more likely to be of public interest and active public engagement could be worked into them.

Panels might need to think about how best to encourage attendance and participation in their meetings, for example, through a fixed time on the agenda for public questions. Many panels have developed a protocol for questions from members of the public and publicise this provision on their websites. More appropriate opportunities for public engagement are likely to be through more proactive scrutiny such as 'task and finish' working and the review of the annual report.

Panel activity held away from a traditional formal setting could enable members to listen to witnesses and enable members of the public to play a more active part by making comments, answering questions or providing their reflections on issues of local concern. These insights might be particularly useful to inform a panel's consideration of the police and crime plan or delivery of aspects of it or when reviewing the proposed precept.

That said, it is essential that the panel remains strategic and not be diverted by more parochial issues. The intention of public involvement should not give rise to an undesirable focus on individual incidents or allow very parochial issues to be considered. These are better resolved by members raising matters as case work in their roles as councillors, rather than being discussed in a meeting. Although the panel is not empowered to resolve local policing matters, it could have a role in signposting issues to the relevant policing departments or the commissioner's office.

Task and finish working

Although they are not explicitly provided for in legislation, panels may set up informal task and finish groups to investigate a specific issue. This may involve a course of several informal meetings, undertaking site visits, convening and facilitating workshops and focus groups, or any other form of evidence gathering. These enable a panel to define the scope of a detailed investigation, to commission a small group of councillors to gather evidence, to investigate a specific issue and to prepare a report for the panel to approve, with recommendations for the commissioner.

Evidence sessions also may enable panels to hear from a wide range of witnesses in order to prepare the panel for meetings with the commissioner or to scrutinise a topic. Such investigations can prove particularly useful for the panel's support function – gathering local insights into issues of concern and contention which would be useful for the commissioner.

Task and finish groups should be brief, targeted, proportionate and focused. Their objectives and approach should be clearly set out in a project scope. A task group might only meet two or three times to consider evidence and maybe once more to agree recommendations. This will enable evidence to be gathered from a wide range of sources, focusing on the role and functions of the commissioner in specific areas.

At task and finish group meetings, evidence may be taken in person, but no one (including the commissioner) is under any obligation to attend. As with all meetings, the panel will have to demonstrate that giving evidence will be a useful and constructive experience and ensure that questioning is inquisitorial, not combative.

Care will have to be taken to ensure that when scoping a review and carrying it out, there will be a return on investment from the activity; that members will be willing and able to give adequate time; and that unreasonable demands are not placed on

the support officer, the commissioner or the commissioner's staff.

Responses to recommendations

Whether meeting in a public panel meeting or having conducted more in-depth scrutiny, the panel will need to seek outcomes. These could include the publishing of reports with recommendations for the commissioner.

Panel arrangements such as a memorandum of understanding could include the following:

- The panel should notify the commissioner of any reports and recommendations in writing, making the process for responding to those recommendations clear.
- The commissioner should respond to the panel's recommendations within two months of being notified of them, unless the panel has agreed to a longer timescale.
- The commissioner's response should set out whether the recommendations are accepted or are rejected.
- Where a recommendation is, or recommendations are, rejected, the commissioner should provide reasons.
- Where a recommendation is, or recommendations are accepted, the panel should return to the topic at a pre-arranged time (usually six months or a year later) to check that the recommendations have been implemented.

Panel effectiveness

Panels are required to fulfil the statutory requirements, but also may go beyond those special functions. Through proactive activity, research and evidence gathering, panels may be better informed and thus more able to provide challenge and support. In all its work, a panel needs to have regard to legislation and regulations, to its commissioner's priorities and plan and to its capacity.

Section five:

Sources of information

Other organisations	
Home Office	www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office
Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee	www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee
Local Government Association (LGA)	www.local.gov.uk/topics/community-safety www.local.gov.uk/topics/fire-and-rescue
Welsh Local Government Association	www.wlga.wales/home www.wlga.wales/policing
Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)	www.cfps.org.uk/?s=policing
National Association of Police (Fire) and Crime Panels (NAPFCP)	www.local.gov.uk/topics/community-safety/policing-and-crime
Association of Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioners (APCC)	www.apccs.police.uk
Association of Policing and Crime Chief Executives (APACE)	www.apace.org.uk
National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)	www.npcc.police.uk
National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC)	www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services	www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/about-us/
Key legislation	
Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 [15th September 2011]	www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/13/contents/enacted www.legislation.gov.uk/changes/affected/ukpga/2011/13
Policing and Crime Act 2017 [31 January 2017]	www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/3/section/38/enacted www.legislation.gov.uk/changes/affected/ukpga/2017/3
Police and Crime Panels (Precepts and Chief Constable Appointments) Regulations 2012	www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2271/contents/made
The Policing Protocol Order 2011	www.gov.uk/government/publications/policing-protocol-order-2011-statutory-instrument

Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) Order 2011	www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/3050/contents/made
Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004	www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents
Fire and Rescue National Framework for England	www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2
Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales	https://law.gov.wales/publicservices/fire-rescue-services/faire-rescue-national-framework/?lang=en#/publicservices/fire-rescue-services/faire-rescue-national-framework/?tab=overview&lang=en
Panel websites	
Avon and Somerset	www.avonandsomersetpoliceandcrimepanel.org.uk
Bedfordshire	www.bedford.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/beds-police-crime-panel
Cambridgeshire	https://democracy.peterborough.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=543
Cheshire	www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/your_council/cheshire-police-and-crime-panel.aspx
Cleveland	www.stockton.gov.uk/community-safety/police-and-crime-panel
Cumbria	http://cumbriapcp.org.uk
Derbyshire	www.derbyshire.gov.uk/community/community-safety/derbyshire-police-and-crime-panel/derbyshire-police-and-crime-panel.aspx
Devon and Cornwall	www.web.plymouth.gov.uk/modgov?modgovlink=http%3A%2F%2Fdemocracy.plymouth.gov.uk%2FmgCommitteeDetails.aspx%3FID%3D1051
Dorset	www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/about-your-council/partnerships/dorset-police-and-crime-panel.aspx
Durham	www.durham.gov.uk/policeandcrimepanel
Dyfed Powys	www.dppoliceandcrimepanel.wales/home
Essex	https://cmis.essexcc.gov.uk/Essexcmis5/Committees/tabid/94/ctl/ViewCMIS_CommitteeDetails/mid/483/id/127/Default.aspx
Gloucestershire	www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/joint-ventures/gloucestershire-police-and-crime-panel
Greater Manchester	www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/police-plus-fire
Gwent	www.gwentpcp.org.uk

Hampshire	www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/governmentinhampshire/police-crime-panel
Hertfordshire	www.hertspcp.org.uk
Humberside	www.northlincs.gov.uk/your-council/about-your-council/council-committees/humberside-police-and-crime-panel
Kent and Medway	www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/partnerships/kent-and-medway-police-and-crime-panel
Lancashire	www.blackburn.gov.uk/Pages/Police-and-crime-panel-for-Lancashire.aspx
Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland	www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/how-the-council-works/other-bodies/the-police-and-crime-panel
Lincolnshire	www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/lpcp
Merseyside	www.knowsley.gov.uk/your-council/decision-making-and-governance/merseyside-police-and-crime-panel
Norfolk	www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/partnerships/crime-and-disorder-partnerships/police-and-crime-panel
North Wales	www.nwpcp.org.uk/en/Home/home.aspx
North Yorkshire	www.nypartnerships.org.uk/pcp
Northamptonshire	https://cmis.northamptonshire.gov.uk/cm5live/Committees/tabid/110/ctl/ViewCMIS_CommitteeDetails/mid/558/id/440/Default.aspx
Northumbria	www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/3627/Northumbria-Police-and-Crime-Panel
Nottinghamshire	www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings-and-committees/nottinghamshire-police-and-crime-panel
South Wales	www.merthyr.gov.uk/council/councillors-and-committees/south-wales-police-and-crime-panel
South Yorkshire	www.southyorks.gov.uk/webcomponents/jsecSYPCP.aspx
Staffordshire	www.staffordshire.gov.uk/yourcouncil/staffordshire-police-and-crime-panel/introductiontothestaffordshirepolicefireandcrimepanel.aspx
Suffolk	www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/crime-and-public-safety/police-and-crime-panel-and-the-police-and-crime-commissioner/police-and-crime-panel

Surrey	www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/emergency-planning-and-community-safety/surrey-police-and-crime-panel
Sussex	www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/how-the-council-works/committees-and-decision-making/joint-arrangements/sussex-police-and-crime-panel
Thames Valley	www.southbucks.gov.uk/article/8102/Thames-Valley-Police-and-Crime-Panel
Warwickshire	https://democratic.warwickshire.gov.uk/cm5/CurrentCommittees/tabid/122/ctl/ViewCMIS_CommitteeDetails/mid/600/id/543/Default.aspx
West Mercia	www.worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=147
West Midlands	www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk
West Yorkshire	www.westyorkshire-pcp.gov.uk
Wiltshire	www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council-democracy-pcp

Examples of activity by Panels

Reviewing other panel websites provides an opportunity to learn from others' experiences and good practice. The following examples are not exhaustive but highlight some approaches that have been taken in different places, which other panels may find useful to review, adopt or adapt to suit their own context and ways of working.

Panel terms of reference	www.nwpcp.org.uk/en/Home/documents/Police-and-Crime-Panel-Terms-of-Reference.pdf https://democracy.peterborough.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=11649 https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=Terms%20of%20Reference%20Panel%20Arrangements%20%20Rules%20of%20Pr&ID=4761&RPID=27497380
Procedure rules	www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/council-and-democracy/cheshire-police-and-crime-panel/procedure-rules-2018-19.pdf www.derbyshire.gov.uk/site-elements/documents/pdf/community/community-safety/derbyshire-police-and-crime-panel/rules-of-procedure.pdf www.glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/s47524/Police%20and%20Crime%20Panel%20Rules%20of%20Procedure.pdf www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/community-and-safety/crime-and-public-safety/police-and-crime-panel/2012-10-23-Rules-of-Procedure.pdf

Memorandum of Understanding	www.meetings.southyorks.gov.uk/documents/s47447/Memorandum%20of%20Understanding%20MOU.pdf?zTS=A
Working arrangements	www.hertspcp.org.uk/content/working-arrangements-police-and-crime-panel
Members' handbook	www.cumbria.gov.uk/eLibrary/Content/Internet/536/647/41236122215.pdf
Recruitment of independent members	www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-july-2017/police-and-crime-panel-recruitment
Panel report on the PCC's refresh of the Police and Crime Plan	www.westyorkshire-pcp.gov.uk/Documents/Publications/WYPCP%20Report%20to%20PCC%20re%20Police%20and%20Crime%20Plan%20-%20June%202018.pdf
Publication of reports to the Commissioner including scrutiny reports	www.avonandsomersetpoliceandcrimepanel.org.uk/panels-key-roles-and-responsibilities www.westyorkshire-pcp.gov.uk/publications
Complaints handling	www.nypartnerships.org.uk/pcpcomplaints
Online complaint form	http://westmidlandspcp.co.uk/complaints/complaint-form
Flowcharts	www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/536/647/4339213121.pdf www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/media/5355/Complaints-Handling-Flowchart/pdf/PCPComplaintsHandlingFlowchart.pdf?m=636733771461370000
Communications strategy	https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Files/PCP_Communications_Strategy_June_2016.pdf
Media protocol	https://democracy.peterborough.gov.uk/documents/s36832/Media%20Protocol.pdf
Website	www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings-and-committees/nottinghamshire-police-and-crime-panel
Twitter feed	www.hertspcp.org.uk http://westmidlandspcp.co.uk
Webcasting	www.southbucks.gov.uk/article/8102/Thames-Valley-Police-and-Crime-Panel

Public participation	<p>www.avonandsomersetpoliceandcrimepanel.org.uk/getting-involved</p> <p>www.northlincs.gov.uk/your-council/about-your-council/council-committees/humberside-police-and-crime-panel/#1534153288323-741b8097-23b2</p> <p>www.nypartnerships.org.uk/sites/default/files/Partnership%20files/Rules%20of%20Public%20Question%20Time_revised%20Nov%202018%20for%20PFCP.pdf</p> <p>www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/how-the-council-works/committees-and-decision-making/joint-arrangements/sussex-police-and-crime-panel/#get-involved</p>
Proactive work	<p>www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/governmentinhampshire/police-crime-panel/proactive-scrutiny</p> <p>https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Files/Creating_Confident_Communities_Review_Task_and_Finish_Group_Report.pdf</p> <p>http://westmidlandspcp.co.uk/panels-fgm-inquiry-report-published-22-june-2015/</p> <p>www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Panel-report-on-Community-Safety-Funding-Jan-2016.pdf</p> <p>www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/media/12417/Task-Group-Chief-Constable-Suspension-Report/pdf/Lincolnshire_PCP_Final_Task_Group_Report.pdf?m=636910096789070000</p>



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REF 10.34