

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

ESSEX POLICE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY BOARD

27 November 2023 10:30 – 13:30

Present:

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, PFCC's office
Ben-Julian Harrington (BJH)	Chief Constable, Essex Police
Suzanne Harris (SH)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny (Police and Crime), PFCC's office
Fiona Henderson (FH)	Director of Continuous Improvement and Analytics, Essex Police
Richard Jones (RJ)	Head of Financial Performance & Reporting, Essex Police
Rachel Nolan (RN)	Assistant Chief Constable, Essex Police
Janet Perry (JP)	Chief Financial Officer / Strategic Head of Performance and Resources, PFCC's Office
Andrew Prophet (AP)	Deputy Chief Constable, Essex Police
Philip Stinger (PS)	(Supt) Head of Specialist Operations, OPC, Essex Police
Samantha Bardsley (SB)	(Minutes), Scrutiny Officer, PFCC's office

Apologies:

Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Debbie Martin (DM)	Chief Finance Officer, Essex Police
Glen Pavelin (GP)	Assistant Chief Constable, Essex Police
Andrew Pritchard (APri)	Assistant Chief Constable, Essex Police

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1. RH welcomed all to the meeting, apologies were noted from those above

2.

2.1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and agreed.

2.1.2. There were no matters arising.

2.2. Action Log

28/23 PEEL Inspection AFIs update
No update due until December 2023.
Remain Open

39/23 Quarterly Performance Report / MSG Aspirations - Q3 drivers Priority 12

Greg Myddelton has advised that reduction in team strength was not intentional and was due to vacancy and long-term sickness, the force should have been alerted by the operational joint education meeting and via the annual review process at SGB.

Close

43/23 Stop and Search / Use of Force

An update was received on the Action Log dated 03/11/2023 and this item can be closed.

Close

49/23 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - Sensitive Material

An update was received on the Action Log dated 04/11/2023 and this item can be closed.

Close

50/23 Monthly Finance Report – Op Hazel

No update due until January 2024

Remain Open

51/23 POA Report – IT Outturn

An update was received on the Action Log dated 22/11/2023 and this item can be closed.

Close

52/23 Monthly and Quarterly Performance Reports – Statistics

An update was received on the Action Log dated 14/11/2024 and this item can be closed.

Close

53/23 Crime Data Accuracy – Errors

An update was received on the Action Log dated 03/11/2023 and this action can be closed.

Close

54/23 HR, Sickness and Attendance management, Staff Performance - Officer Availability

Rebecca Humphreys has advised this paper has been tasked and data collection is underway. The paper is anticipated to be complete for the December submission.

Remain Open

2.3. Forward Plan

2.3.1. SH advised there were two items that needed to be confirmed onto the Forward Plan, the Procurement Act 2023 was suggested for the December meeting being held on the 4th January 2024 and Right Care Right Person was suggested for the January meeting being held on 25th January 2024. Feedback from the force suggests that it would be preferred they fall later in 2024. AP confirmed the request is to move both to the February 2024 meeting. RH, after some discussion, agreed that both papers could be moved to the February 2024 meeting.

Action 55/23

The Procurement Act 2023 and the Right Care Right Person papers to be added to the February 2024 meeting on the Forward Plan.

3. Monthly Finance Report

3.1. RJ presented the Monthly Finance Report with the revenue and capital position in month 7 not changing significantly from month 6. The revenue forecast overspend as at month 7 is £0.066m against the 2023/24 revenue budget of £363.7m (0.02% variance). The capital financial monitoring

position for month 7 is a forecast spend of £16.254m, which is a £3.451m underspend against the latest revised budget of £19.704m (17.5% variance).

- 3.2. There was one appropriation from the restructuring reserve, in connection to the Crime and Public Protection Assessment Centre – Funding of severance and financial strain expenditure incurred by the force.
- 3.3. The waterfalls are now consistent with ECFRS reporting. Essex continues to see the bars reduce as would be expected month on month.
- 3.4. Section 3.5 covers the table of movements since last month were there is movement from a £0.2m overspend to a £0.1m overspend. Key movements included police officer pay and allowances, staff pay and allowances and supplies and services.
- 3.5. RH noted on the headcount figures that in September we were comfortably the right side of the requirement and asked will we therefore receive the batch one and two income that has been requested. RJ confirmed this is the case and that we are in a strong position to meet the PUP funding requirement.
- 3.6. JP noted in the budget Essex Police took out £3.25 million to put to one off expenditure from the general reserve, and asked how is this going to end up reported, ensuring it was spent on one off things? RJ noted there had been discussions regarding this and agreed they need to build upon what is shared here.
- 3.7. RJ continued onto capital and spoke about the forecast outturn monthly movement between month 6 at £16.7m down to £16.254m for Month 7. This is mainly in connection to the IT workforce management tool which has been removed from 'subject to approvals' since Essex are now seeking a revenue funding approach.
- 3.8. Treasury Management was discussed, advising that at month 6 Essex Police had a small deficit which would have resulted in external borrowing; they are now reverting to a small surplus which should result in there no longer being the requirement to borrow.

4. Monthly Performance Report

- 4.1. FH presented the Monthly Performance Report, and noted there has been one change in the recommended grades since the last report: Priority 10 (Encouraging volunteers and community support) has been downgraded from Adequate to Requires Improvement due to the Force's comparatively low number of Special Constables. There was one area of exceptional reporting where the force saw a statistically significant increase in vehicle offences in October 2023.
- 4.2. Crime Prevention showed there was a 6.5% decrease in All Crime. Demand for 101 calls in the force control room has also continued to decrease with a 24.8% drop and in the resolution centre is down 9%, average wait times are also improving in both areas.
- 4.3. Drug Driven Violence showed Essex experienced 3 fewer drug related homicides. There was a 9.5% decrease in Violence with Injury offences and a 14.9% decrease in the number of knife-enabled crime offences. Essex conducted 33.6% more Organised Crime Group disruptions.
- 4.4. Protecting Vulnerable People and Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Abuse (DA) saw Essex experiencing a 16.5% decrease in the number of recorded Domestic Abuse offences and repeat Domestic Abuse is down by 11.4%. Essex Police solved 16.4% fewer DA offences, however, these volumes have been affected by the changes to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR rules). There is a similar pattern with the Child Abuse picture, Essex Police solved 10.3% fewer child

abuse offences, whilst there was a 6.9% decrease in offences. The number of Domestic Violence Protection Notices issued decreased by 38.8%.

- 4.5. Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) showed Essex experienced a 13.9% decrease in the number of Violence Against the Person offences committed against females. There was a 11.8% decrease in the number of Sexual Offences committed against females, solved rates were also up 19% year on year and against 2019.
- 4.6. Improving Support for Victims of Crime showed Essex experienced a 16.3% decrease in the number of offences with a repeat victim. The number of individual repeat victims decreased by 9.7%. There was a 2.7% decrease in the number of referrals to Victim Support.
- 4.7. Protecting Rural and Isolated Areas showed Rural Crime decreased by 7.2% with offences stabilising since May 2023.
- 4.8. Preventing Dog Theft saw 2 fewer reported dog thefts and the number of dog thefts solved has increased by 4.
- 4.9. Reducing Business Crime, Fraud and Cyber Crime saw Essex experience a 6.8% increase in the number of Business Crime offences and a 5.6% increase in the number of offences solved. Shoplifting accounts for approximately 50.9% of business crime.
- 4.10. Improving Safety on our Roads shows there was a 3.9% decrease in drink/drug driving offences, this is made up of a 11.3% decrease in drink driving and a 7.3% increase in drug driving. There was a 126.8% increase in the number of driving related mobile phone offences.
- 4.11. Encouraging Volunteers and Community Support was the only priority to change grading, down to requires improvement. This is due to numbers deteriorating across several measures for a number of months in a row. The Special Constabulary headcount is currently 286 this is down 20.6%.
- 4.12. Supporting our Officers and Staff shows improvements are needed on the ethnic minority proportionality which has dropped. Officer sickness has reduced to just under half a day, whilst Staff and PCSO sickness has increased. Officer vacancies have increased, and staff have decreased.
- 4.13. Increasing collaboration showed there has been a 24.5% decrease in audience numbers in relation to the Joint Education Team.
- 4.14. RH asked how sustainable the improvements to the call handling data is. BJH advised the Target Operating Model (TOM) has been agreed to commence at the beginning of April which will see a gear change in performance and a further gear change will be seen with the shift pattern change, better aligning supply to demand, so the focus here is sustainable.
- 4.15. RH noted the points made around Domestic Abuse and VAWG solved rates, he asked if it is a concern if we are seeing solved rates slip and queried if it is right to rate the performance as good. After some discussion RH suggested if we do not see the results stabilise next month this should be reconsidered.
- 4.16. RH noted there are also concerns around puppy farming on social media in the county and asked if Essex Police have heard anything about this. AP agreed he had also heard this informally, but there is nothing by way of a specific intelligence profile, however this will be investigated.

Action 56/23

EP to explore and confirm if the informal concerns around puppy farming in our county on social media are founded.

4.17. RH mentioned the drink and drug driving statistics and noted that we know this work is based around proactivity in policing. He asked if it is possible to see the percentage of tests given that are passed or failed, to put this proactivity into further context. AP advised we do have this data and this can be produced.

Action 57/23

EP to produce data based on the pass and failure rate of drink/drug driving tests that are carried out, as a percentage.

PS joined the meeting at 11:58

5. Use of Force / Stop and Search

5.1. AP presented the Use of Force and Stop and Search paper starting with an overview on Use of Force which showed a decrease of 1.6%. Two thirds of Use of Force continues to be due to compliant or non-compliant handcuffing. 77% of people subject to Use of Force are male and 37% are in the 18-34 age range which continues to be the consistent profile. The proportion of subjects from Ethnic Minorities against whom force was used continues to be higher than the proportion within the population of Essex as a whole. 8.9% of subjects against whom force was used were Black; This is 5.5 percentage points higher than the 3.4% Black resident population proportion in Essex.

5.2. Stop and Search showed just under 4,000 stops recorded in the quarter, a decrease of 8.6%. The majority of stops occurred in the main population centres of the county and these correlate to the Op Grip and Op Dial areas. 97.0% of stops in the last quarter were PACE and Misuse of Drugs Stops. The peak age range for those stopped is 18-24 with 83.5% of these subjects being male. An individual from an Ethnic Minority is 1.9 times more likely to be stopped than a white individual. 27.4% of Essex outcomes were positive this quarter.

5.3. RH noted on Use of Force it suggests that over time we are substantially increasing the level of force we are using and asked for comments. BJH noted two points, firstly that tactical communications, shouting at someone, now gets recorded as a Use of Force and secondly compliant handcuffing is now being encouraged; These both increase the figures. PS advised the forms being completed for Use of Force now has a higher scrutiny and the returns are in a much better place also increasing figures.

5.4. SH asked if the force could be clearer in the narrative as to what constitutes a strip search, to recognise and clarify for the reader the range of things this includes. PS agreed this was a good point as the terminology can be challenging if you are not of a policing background.

Action 58/23

A narrative as to what constitutes a strip search to explain the scope of this to be included in future reports for clarity.

5.5. RH noted looking at disproportionality we need to understand not just that there is disproportionality, but also if we have done so unfairly, it would be helpful to have a table that shows the disproportionality in terms of stop and search and the disproportionality in terms of positive outcomes all by ethnicity to ensure these stops are intelligence led. BJH agreed this was a good metric to look at. AP agreed to take this away.

Action 59/23

A table showing the disproportionality in terms of positive outcomes by all ethnicities to be included in reports.

PS left the meeting at 12.22

6. Collaboration

- 6.1. FH Presented the annual Collaboration paper. 10 collaborative workstreams are reported, 7 have a green status, 3 are rated amber and none are red. Only 1 has moved from green to amber status for this reporting period, which was Mental Health.
- 6.2. Essex/Kent collaboration has the workstreams of Serious Crime Directorate (SCD) and Support Services Directorate (SSD) both are graded green. The flexibility afforded by joint collaborative working here was noted as well as several joint IT ventures which have been released recently.
- 6.3. Regional Collaboration has the workstream of ERIN the Eastern Region Innovation Network, this is new to the report this year and graded green. The force's own innovation team works very closely with ERIN and good work was noted in this space.
- 6.4. National collaboration has the workstreams of Digital Policing Portfolio (DPP) and Digital Public Contact (DPC) graded green.
- 6.5. Local collaboration has workstreams of the Essex County Fire & Rescue Service (ECFRS), Local Crime Reduction Collaborations (Community Safety Hubs) and Mental Health, all of which are graded amber. ECFRS saw approval for the expansion of the tri-service rural community prevention officer project which is seen as a big success. Community Safety Hubs have been successfully set up in eight of the ten districts with Harlow and Thurrock remaining. Mental Health has reduced from green to amber, Right Care Right Person dominates this space and the challenges here are to ensure this works smoothly and effectively.
- 6.6. External and Innovative Partnerships has workstreams of Essex Centre for Data Analytics (ECDA), Innovative Partnerships – BT Hothouse and Cyber Specials and Volunteers, all of which are graded green.
- 6.7. RH noted that we talk about Community Safety Hubs, but we don't talk at all about Community Safety Partnerships. He requested that going forward the force should include these in the report.

Action 60/23

The work of the community safety partnerships is to be included in reports.

- 6.8. RH also noted on the collaboration with ECFRS that of the profiled £15m we have realised £8m so far, but we have not said to which organisation these benefits have fallen. He felt this should be included in reporting.

RN joined the meeting at 12:29

JP left the meeting at 12:33

7. Homicide Scrutiny

- 7.1. RN presented the Homicide Scrutiny paper, highlighting that investigation of homicide remains strong and thorough, leading to successful convictions at court.
- 7.2. The long-term homicide trend is slightly decreasing with there generally being less than two homicides per month. There were no homicides in January, March or June 2023. However, July, August and September saw 7 recorded homicides, which is a peak when considering the last rolling year, but when considered over more historic data is not as significant.
- 7.3. Males are still most likely to be victims of homicide in Essex, race tends to be in line with the census though if you are Black/Black British you are more likely to be an outlier. There is more work on understanding this being undertaken but the low numbers make it difficult to pick out any trends.
- 7.4. The Crime and Public Protection (C&PP) Mental Health Team (MHT) has now been embedded. The role of the team is to provide the holistic overview of Mental Health in Essex around the three areas of Response, Investigation and Prevention.
- 7.5. RH noted that many homicides are the unintended result of violence, however when looking at the near miss offences, these have significantly increased since 2016 and the number of homicides has decreased in the same timeframe. RH queried how it does not seem to make sense how these sit together. RN believed the strategy and focus on this is successful intervening, Essex are now much more focused on what the early risk factors are around domestic abuse and can prioritise and intervene earlier. BJH noted that there is also disparity in that the homicides are what gets charged, the near misses are recorded allegations not necessarily what would be charged, so could be overinflated.
- 7.6. SH mentioned the Winter Homicide Campaign, which was mentioned in the Homicide Prevention Board earlier this month., The PFCC's Office had a copy of the submitted bid and have heard nothing since. The PFCC comms team had an enquiry which suggest this bid has been successful and SH queried if this is the case. RN confirmed she was not aware of this and will make further enquiries.

Action 61/23

RN to find out if the Winter Homicide Campaign bid was successful and report back in to the PFCC's Office.

8.

8.1. Public Contact

- 8.1.1. RN presented the Public Contact paper; there were 4 HMICFRS areas for improvement noted, non-emergency abandonment rates, repeat callers, crime prevention and routine incident attendance. Improvements have been seen in all of these areas and 1 closed.
- 8.1.2. Discussions were had regarding 999 calls and 101 calls into the force control room and the resolution centre including abandonment rates and other methods of contact such as single online home and live chat. Call triage was trialled within the Resolution Centre to reduce the time it takes to answer 101 calls and to ensure that the caller is getting the service that they need. Due to the early indicators of success, this is now being piloted to apply to all 101 calls, regardless of where they are received.
- 8.1.3. Rapid Video Response (RVR) shows some very positive early indicators on the impact this is having on response times and on the time an incident remains open for; issues are

dealt with quicker and response times are faster utilising this method. 90% of victims are saying they are happy with the service received. RVR will be reviewed to consider wider utilisation across a variety of crime types, rather than just DA.

8.1.4. RH noted there was a shift away from the live chat facility and queried why, despite this being so popular with a broad demographic, we intentionally reduced it. RN confirmed last summer Essex struggled with call handling so took the decision to reduce the live chat function from the hours of 0700-2300 to 1000-2100 to focus on the call handling. Essex are keen when comfortable with the call handling again to fully re-open the live chat.

8.2. High Harm Crime

8.2.1. RN Presented the High Harm Crime paper. Essex Police has determined High Harm offences are those which most significantly impact on the public, namely dwelling burglary, robbery, rape, serious sexual offences, and violence with injury. The only one with a standardised response is dwelling burglary, otherwise the response is informed by the THRIVE assessment.

8.2.2. RH queried the charts in the High Harm paper and noted the percentage met on fig 3 (high harm incidents, emergency response met) taking a significant dip in September 2023. RN advised that September was a really unusual month, there were significant challenges with access to Athena, particularly hot weather, really high call volumes and large numbers of people being tutored in all areas of the control room and resolution centre. These combined factors saw the worst performance we had seen for some time which was frustrating; It was confirmed however, this is not the case for October which shows the statistics to be back on track.

8.2.3. RH also noted on fig 4 (high harm incidents, priority response met) it seems Essex are only consistently meeting around 35% of their priority responses for high harm incidents and asked is this where the force would want to be. BJH acknowledged the answer was no this is not where he would like the force to be. RN advised that a priority response is within 60 mins which is easy to miss within a few minutes when driving in rural areas; to add context when looked at in greater detail the force is only missing by 5 minutes or so.

8.2.4. BJH asked for these two papers to become one paper in future. RH agreed and asked that content be agreed in consultation with SH. He confirmed, and it was agreed, that the new joint paper should come back on a quarterly basis.

Action 62/23

The Public Contact Performance and Response to High Harm Crime papers are to be merged into one paper going forward and to be added to the Forward Plan for quarterly reporting.

9. Approval for publishing of documents

9.1. All papers were approved for publishing.

10. Any Other Business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 13:27 hours

Future meeting dates

- Thursday 4 January 2024 10.30 (December meeting)
- Thursday 25 January 2024 10.00