

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

ESSEX POLICE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY BOARD

15 January 2024 11:00 – 13:00

Present:

Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, PFCC's office (Chair)
Darren Deex (DD)	Supt HR Projects, Essex Police
Suzanne Harris (SH)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny, PFCC's office
Rebecca Humphreys (RHu)	Head of Operational HR, Essex Police
Richard Jones (RJ)	Head of Financial Performance and Reporting, Essex Police
Dr Natalie Mann (NM)	Head of Research and Analysis, Essex Police
Andrew Mariner (AM)	Assistant Chief Constable, Essex Police
Debbie Martin (DM)	Chief Finance Officer, Essex Police
Andrew Prophet (AP)	Deputy Chief Constable, Essex Police
Jeremy White (JW)	Finance Manager, PFCC's office

Samantha Bardsley (SB) (Minutes), Scrutiny Officer, PFCC's office

Apologies:

Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
BJ Harrington (BJH)	Chief Constable, Essex Police
Fiona Henderson (FH)	Director of Continuous Improvement and Analytics, Essex Police
Richard Leicester (RL)	Director of HR, Essex Police
Janet Perry (JP)	Chief Financial Officer / Strategic Head of Performance and Resources, PFCC's Office

1. Welcome and Apologies

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

2.

2.1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1.1. Minor adjustments to the minutes were requested as follows:

- Richard Jones title to read 'Head of Financial Performance and Reporting.
- 4.13 to state this is in relation to the joint education team.
- 4.17 there is a small typo and 'het' should read 'he'.

With the above amendments the minutes were approved and agreed.

2.1.2. There were no matters arising.

2.2. Action Log

28/23 PEEL Inspection AFIs update

An update was received on the Action Log dated 08/12/2023 and this action can be closed.
Close

50/23 Monthly Finance Report – Op Hazel

This requires JP's input to close and will be taken offline to discuss with her.
Remain Open

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

Following feedback on the paper received, BJH has asked for this paper to go through COG before it is re-submitted to the PFCC's office which will not be before the January 2024 board. It is unlikely this will be able to be closed until February 2024's board but the information will be sent into the PFCC's Office as soon as it is available.
Remain Open

55/23 Forward Plan - Item Submissions

Completed 15/12/2023.
Close

56/23 Monthly Performance Report - Puppy Farming

An update was received on the Action Log dated 14/12/2023 and this action can be closed.
Close

57/23 Monthly Performance Report - Drink/Drug Drive Testing

An update has been received that the information is not captured at present, however, a new system is coming in that will collate the information in future. At present the statistics confirm 90% of drink tests were negative for the 12 months to August 2023 and 10% were failures and the percentages are broadly consistent across the months.
Close

58/23 Use of Force / Stop and Search – Narrative

To be included in the next report due February 2024.
Remain Open

59/23 Use of Force / Stop and Search – Disproportionality

To be included in the next report due February 2024.
Remain Open

60/23 Collaboration - CSP's

To be included in the next report due November 2024.
Remain Open

61/23 Homicide Scrutiny - Winter Homicide Campaign Bid

An update was received on the Action Log dated 14/12/2024 and this action can be closed.
Close

62/23 Public Contact / High Harm Crime- Joint Paper

The forward plan has been updated with quarterly Public Contact / High Harm papers and a meeting booked between SH and RN for 23/01/2024 to agree new format and content.
Close

2.3. Forward Plan

2.3.1. The changes discussed in the last meeting have been added including the addition of the quarterly public contact / high harm papers.

2.3.2. There is a request that an additional paper on the new Code of Ethics be added, the proposal is that it is put on to the forward plan for April 2024. PBI advised there was a query from the secretary to the Police Fire and Crime Panel about the next Ethics and Integrity subcommittee meeting which the subcommittee suggested at its last meeting should be in March 2024, but it doesn't have any forward plan item. Could this paper come to the March 2024 P&R so this can inform the subcommittee in March 2024 or should it be suggested that the subcommittee item comes to May 2024 after it has been to P&R in April as proposed.

Action 63/23

AP agreed to take this away to consider what could be included in the paper if it were to be presented in March as opposed to the possible content in April, and to advise on the findings and when would be best to have the Code of Ethics paper come to P&RS Board.

2.3.3. PBI raised how the deep dive minutes were to be approved and SH confirmed there was no set process at present but that it would make sense if going forward they go on to the agenda for approval, PBI agreed.

Action 64/23

The Support for Victims of Crime Deep Dive Draft Minutes approval to be added to the 25 January 2024 board's agenda and all Deep Dives following P&R to be approved in this way going forwards.

3. Monthly Finance Report

3.1. DM presented the monthly finance report advising that the position at month 8 was £192k underspend on revenue, the previous month it was £66k. The main forecast movements can be found in table 3.5 on pg13 of the report. The capital underspend is £3.97m, the movement month on month was predominantly to do with IT infrastructure.

3.2. JW noted the year to date actual at £8m and asked if EP were sure if they were going to complete the capital program? DM confirmed it was the IT figures that look strange, this is predominantly to do with two orders and once the goods receipts are in this should all sort out for year end.

4. Efficiency and Savings Programme

4.1. NM presented the efficiency and savings programme, the summary being that EP is largely lined up to deliver, tracking a £0.183m full year shortfall through the Efficiency and Savings Board and options to close this will be explored as part of the future budget setting. The savings requirement for 2024/25 of circa £14m has been addressed through the professionalism efficiency and savings programme, at the time of reporting there was £12.481m of savings to be identified, leaving a shortfall to address; since that report was written it is known the final settlement figure has reduced to approx. £0.5m. Significant contributors to address in the savings requirement for 2024/25 are force wide non pay, income recovery, increased vacancy factor, impactive recruitment lag for small departments and business cases for change being developed. £2.941m of non cashable savings have also been identified and will now be delivered under the governance of the Efficiency and Savings Board. The 2025/26 efficiency and savings plan is even larger and will require significant force wide activity to deliver against. At this stage, EP have identified a potential £0.1m one off and

at £1.311m recurring saving to the program and work to identify savings options for 2025/26 are already underway. There's now an entry on the Strategic Risk Register, which relates to the 2024/25 MTFS and the need to deliver a balanced budget.

4.2. DM noted that at this date the budget letter that has gone across to RH has a balanced budget in terms of the savings for 2024/25.

5. Monthly Performance Report

5.1. NM presented the Monthly Performance Report up to the end of November. No gradings to any priorities have changed.

5.2. PBI advised it was pleasing to see the improvement in the FCR and Resolution Centre 101 calls.

5.3. PBI asked about the reduction in Drug Driven Homicide, but noted homicide overall seems to be up on the rolling 12 months, if this is not drug related, what is driving this, are there any trends? AP confirmed all homicides are reviewed and there were no concerning trends identified.

5.4. PBI noted the fall in public confidence in how police and partners are dealing with drug related crime and asked if there was any update available in terms of the actions being taken to address this? AP confirmed there was nothing specific beyond the normal communications that are put out in terms of proactivity and the work of the Violence Reduction Partnership; and agreed there may be something for EP to think about regarding what will drive confidence that police and others are working to combat drug crime.

5.5. PBI talked about priority 3 which is recommended for a grading of Good. PBI was conscious that in the minutes of the last meeting there was concern re the solved numbers slipping and a query as to if this should still be recommended as Good; as the solved numbers are still in decline with confidence also down. AP advised broadly speaking the amount solved is falling proportionally to the decrease in offending and EP's perspective is there is more positive than negative in that. The tipping point to downgrade would be a continued slide in the rate of solved crime as opposed to a fall in the number that have been solved. AM agreed when you look at the data there is a change of 0% when talking about the solved rate. PBI noted this was an interesting point as there was debate as to if it was more meaningful to report on the number or the proportion of crime solved and PBI was never sure this landed quite right on numbers and that this might be something to consider as part of the development of the next Police and Crime Plan. AP wondered if it was helpful to include this in the narrative of the report and PBI agreed this would be helpful.

Action 65/23

NM to include in the narrative of the report details around the solved rates of crime.

5.6. PBI noted the slight but continued fall in ethnic minority representation as a percentage of the workforce, it was wondered if this was more of a retention issue than a recruitment issue and asked how this was being addressed. RHu advised there was a slight spike in attrition and that this has since stabilised. Both retention and recruitment are being worked on, it is a stable position but not advancing at the speed that would be liked. PBI asked if there were any common themes in the spike. RHu stated there weren't any specific trends in the spike with a range of reasons given.

5.7. PBI noted on slide 44 it notes a significant increase in Police Officer vacancies, the impression is that recruitment is on track despite its challenges, so is the increase down to a retention or attrition issue. RHu advised generally in terms of attrition EP are on track with their projections, in terms of the spike in vacancies EP continues to work alongside the recruitment plan, it is not a retention issue.

- 5.8. PBI noted on slide 25 it notes the significant increase in the average time to investigate high harm offences and wondered what is being done around this. AP advised that this is a metric that EP asks of itself, "is it telling us anything useful?" On comparison to 2019 there is an increase of 22 days, but it also shows us solving more high harm crime. Is a slightly longer good quality investigation with the right outcome better than a short investigation with the wrong one and certainly it is. AM agreed there are different reasons for this and we don't want teams under pressure to close investigations quickly.
- 5.9. SH talked about priority 5, advising that the only improved metric is the number of offences with repeat victims and was interested to know what EP have done to make this better and if it can be duplicated elsewhere. AP stated there were two things behind this, one is procedural with the proper recording of stalking and harassment offences, secondly the problem solving to support individuals to minimise repeat victimisation. AM also praised the work of the problem solving repository which is open to all on SharePoint.
- 5.10. SH stated priority 12 is still reading "due to a lack of qualitative information a grade of adequate is recommended". It is understood that the data comes from ECFRS; yet the point is coming where we need to understand this better, and if it is the case we don't have the information to provide a qualitative report the PFCC expectation is that conversations need to happen with ECFRS. PBI advised NM that Ch/Supt Leighton Hammett has recently sat in on some of the Joint Education Team sessions himself and been really impressed with the work that they've been delivering, it was explained to him that there have been frustrations on EP's side about some of the commentary that comes through in these reports and he offered to pick this up.

Action 66/23

NM to link in with Ch/Supt Leighton Hammett regarding priority 12 and getting more qualitative information from ECFRS for reporting purposes.

- 5.11. SH advised there used to be some information at the end of this report around the overview of indicators and how many were improving or deteriorating and a copy of the crime tree data and wondered if there was a reason this had dropped off and if it could return? AP advised there was no conscious reason for its omission and could see no reason why it could not return.

Action 67/23

NM to re-introduce the tables regarding the overview of indicators improving/deteriorating and the copy of the crime tree data to the report.

- 5.12. PBI noted on slide 45 the commentary says the number of programmes delivered have decreased whereas the numbers suggest there is a small increase and asked if this could be checked before publishing.

Action 68/23

NM to check slide 45 for a potential typo (inconsistency in references to number of programmes delivered) before publishing as the commentary contradicts the numbers on the slide.

6. Public Perception Survey

- 6.1. NM summarised the public perception survey advising confidence has stabilised with signs of improvement despite a negative focus on trust and confidence within policing at a national level throughout the last year. Headlines included 77% in Q2 believe Essex Police are doing a good or excellent job. Perceptions of fairness are stable. Visibility in communities show a slight quarterly increase as do perception of service. General perceptions of crime and policing show stable quarterly results but a reduction in this year compared to last year. In terms of ethnic disparity, confidence remains higher for ethnic minorities, for overall service and dealing with crime. 44% of

victims were satisfied with how they were kept informed during their investigation, 20% of victims had a higher opinion of police following their experience, this is the highest 12-month figure in the past four years. The biggest disparity we see between females and males remains in the feeling of safety when walking alone after dark. Essex Police continues to follow a similar trend to other forces in perceptions on how good a job they're doing and their use of stop and search.

- 6.2. PBI noted looking across slides 3 and 21, it looks like there has been a slight decline in female confidence in local policing over the last 12 months. There also appears to be reductions among females in confidence in receiving a good service when reporting a crime, bringing offenders to justice and dealing with drug crimes. It starts to create a particularly worrying picture about reductions in confidence amongst women. AP agreed and noted this has also been picked up by EP; EP couldn't pinpoint anything locally that is being done which would cause a concern, there is a national consequence regarding the headlines around policing and misogyny, sexism and shocking behaviour that could be having an impact here.
- 6.3. SH advised 44% of victims are satisfied with how well they are kept informed of progress which is suggesting that 56% are not satisfied, although there is a lot of work in this area it feels like it is not showing through; do we think there is a time lag or do we still need to be doing more. AP advised he believed there was a time lag, and it is hoped this will improve going forward.
- 6.4. SH noted on slide 17 the narrative states in general the higher volume lower harm crime types which impact more people had lower satisfaction, but the DA satisfaction has dropped by 13% from quite a stable position since 2019; and the only one with a significant increase appears to be criminal damage. AP advised EP have not put their finger on anything that would say they have done something fundamentally different that would have a downward impact. AM noted that this could be to do with the reduction in solved cases of standard risk DA offences.
- 6.5. PBH noted on slide 72 and 73 of the appendix some of the statements did not appear to resonate, slide 72 says those with a disability are more likely to have been a victim of crime over the past two years. The following slide talked about there being a high proportion of respondents to the survey claiming to have been the victims of stalking or harassment and violent crime; PBI was not sure that correlates to the crime stats themselves and welcomed views on the understanding of this. SH noted that it would be helpful to gather a bit more demographic information about the people responding to the survey and that we need to make sure that we feed some of this into the recommissioning of the survey.

Action 69/23

SH to speak with Darren Horsman regarding the conversation had in 6.5 above around the SMSR data and demographic capture to ensure the right people are linked in.

DD joined the meeting at 1200

7. Recruitment of Specials

- 7.1. AM presented the Recruitment of Specials report, advising there is a lot of effort going on in this area, but there is more to do. The paper reports there is a continual decline in Specials since 2021. Nationally there has been a reduction in volunteers with a decline of 12,000 to 8,000 volunteers from 2018 to 2022 and EP is in line with this national picture. However, as of this morning there were 8 new applications this week, the highest amount in a week for some time, and there are 49 people in the pipeline; showing the effort EP is putting in is starting to show benefits. EP are still the 2nd largest Special Constabulary after the Met. EP have also had some great successes regarding employer supported policing. Next steps show work on recruitment events utilising the PFCC funded recruitment materials. It was also noted there was more that could be done to improve the work life balance issues going into 2024 and looking at the minimum number of hours work that is asked of the Specials. It was also advised there are 220 spaces on courses ready to receive new recruits confirming EP is ready for growth.

- 7.2. PBI was pleased to hear about the work on flexibility, supporting work life balance and making this a more accessible opportunity for people.
- 7.3. SH addressed the number of hours completed dropping from 49k hrs to 40k hrs and asked if this decline is something new, or something that hasn't been highlighted previously. AM advised the gap has always been there, but it hasn't been this stark before. AM noted although there is a tipping point, as specials are expensive to train and recruit, that they would still rather have more specials doing fewer hours and retain them for longer.
- 7.4. SH asked about the recruitment timeline, how long is it from application to pass out, and do we think there is possibility the length of time is having an impact on withdrawals. RHu advised because of the desire to have new recruits start as soon as possible EP progress as fast as they can, and EP reiterates at the beginning the process the different stages required to pass through and that this can take some time. It is not known if the length of time is a factor in the withdrawal rate nor can an exact time frame be provided, as it is different for all applicants. AP noted vetting would be part of the reason for a time delay and there is a constant juggling act here to prioritise the right areas.
- 7.5. PBI noted the 10 Specials in the pipeline as Community Specials and asked are there more Town and Parish Councils getting on board, or is this increasing capacity in areas that already have them. AM believed this was more councils being interested.
- 7.6. SH brought up that the table at section 5.3 gives data for years from 2016 onwards and noted that for 2023/24, this data is for a partial year. It was asked if this can be clarified in the narrative before the report is published.

Action 70/23

AM to update the narrative in section 5.3 to note that the data for 2023/24 is for a partial year before publishing. Paper to be resubmitted to PFCC's office.

8. Crime Prevention Strategy – action plan and performance

- 8.1. AM presented the Crime Prevention Strategy paper highlighting that all crime continues to fall, the Star Chamber was good, with every crime prevention lead in attendance, and Ch/Supt Leighton Hammett gave a good overview of where we are, and what is left to do, providing confidence here.
- 8.2. PBI noted pg4 talks about Op Grip and the reduction in reducing Knife Crime and Serious Violence and asked is this a reduction in the Op Grip areas or across EP as a whole? AM advised this can be included in future reports, but the level of detail is not immediately available.
- 8.3. PBI noted the trafficking of drugs offences on pg8 where both measures have been colour coded red, does an increase of offences get interpreted as a bad thing as the report suggests or could it be interpreted as a good thing in terms of this being a product of proactive policing. AM agreed it could be interpreted either way and he would see it as a good thing.
- 8.4. PBI noted on pg17/18 the work of POLIT, advising it states the volume of referrals is controlled within POLIT and the activity has historically been based on the resourcing capacity of the proactive team. PBI queried does this mean there is insufficient capacity to deal with the demand. AM advised it is believed the resourcing is right. However, AM noted the more resourcing put in, the more would be found because of the nature of the work; which is probably what the sentence is relating too.
- 8.5. PBI noted on pg19 one of the strands of the Strategy is around informing and influencing the education of young people against drug use. PBI wondered if this focus on younger people overlooked the proportion of middle-aged seemingly successful people with a drug habit and asked

is there any targeting of this demographic. AM advised there is more EP can do as they move towards greater use of Out of Court Disposals, in the use of drugs services to educate people. This does rely on partners being able to support that education piece. EP are linked closely to drug services so where they do come across adults with drug issues there are drug and alcohol services available for referrals.

- 8.6. PBI noted the burglary figures on pg26 may have a typo and asked for this to be checked before publishing.

Action 71/23

AM to check the % difference +/- is correct for the figures on pg26 of the report (in relation to burglary) before publishing.

- 8.7. SH brought up Op Calibre and asked now there has been some activity here if there was any update on the impact it has had. AM advised that this resulted in a reduction of 27% of personal robbery offences throughout this week compared to the weekly average and nearly 4 times as many solved offences compared with the weekly average. Outstanding robbery suspects were also reduced and there was an emphasis on crime prevention and public engagement, with many school visits and community engagement events taking place.

9. Performance against the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

- 9.1. DD presented the PSED report advising EP continues to see the benefits of their recruitment marketing channel plan to reach and encourage people from all backgrounds to join as Officers. Of the 930 applications that EP had, 38% were female and 14% were from ethnic minority applicants. The challenge is EP converting this number of applicants to employees. Ethnic minority officers by rank shows that in the six-month period under review there had been increases in ethnic minority representation at the ranks of Ch/Supt, Supt and Insp, representation at the ranks of Ch/Insp and Sgt remained static and there has been a minor reduction at the Constable rank. There has been an increase in the overall proportion and headcount of female officers since March last year and EP has also seen increases in the percentage of female Sgt's and above within the same period. DD spoke about narrowing disparity, ethnic minority individuals are 1.6 times more likely to have force used upon them than white individuals, this is a reduction from 2.68 times more likely in September 2022. Ethnic minority individuals are 1.86 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white individuals. Ethnic minority respondents have a higher confidence in receiving a good service when compared to white respondents. DD then spoke about the improvements of EP's inclusivity culture, advising phases one and two of the diversity training has now been delivered for 1400 leaders and over 3000 staff with the remaining booked on for future sessions and phase three is underway.
- 9.2. SH noted that statistics show the promotion success rates for women and those of ethnic minorities are lower than the average and asked is it understood why this is? DD advised looking at ethnic minority, they start from a small pool, but it is important to emphasise the amount of positive action work that goes into supporting these individuals to make them aware of processes and the support mechanisms in place. RHu advised they are wise to it, and a lot of the briefings are around myth busting of postings because it can carry some extra issues where people have caring responsibilities for example. There is a lot of work with both MESA and the WLDF helping and supporting to reduce barriers.
- 9.3. PBI noted on pg11 it talks about the increase in staff recording protected characteristics and demographics across the board, apart from with Specials. PBI wondered if there were any barriers, or any targeted activity to try and improve this. DD advised he was not aware of any targeted activity which would suggest this is a process issue.

DD left the meeting at 12.57

10. PEEL Inspection AFI's update

- 10.1. NM presented the PEEL Inspection AFI's update advising that 4 AFI's have been successfully closed with no new or draft AFI's. 4 are rated Green and 6 are rated Amber with no Red. At the most recent PEEL AFI Star Chamber in December there was a regrading of 3 AFI's back to Amber which previously had been Green. The AFI's which were adjusted were AFI 1, EP needs to do more to evaluate its approach to problem solving and tackling crime. AFI 10, EP needs to ensure that it has the capacity and capability to undertake nationally recognised risk assessments in a timely manner and that supervisory reviews are of a standard that helps it to effectively manage the risk posed by RSO's. AFI 12, EP needs to ensure that it understands current capability and capacity in more details to improve resource deployment and effective management of demand. There are no risks currently on the strategic risk register which relate to the AFI's.
- 10.2. PBI praised the review of the AFI's internally within EP and welcomed that there was a much more cautious and realistic assessment.
- 10.3. PBI noted AFI 12, and the expectation that HMICFRS will want reassurance the correct number of officers are on the ground with the right skills in line with the ability to respond to calls and cases. PBI asked what level of confidence EP has that they will be able to provide this reassurance. AP advised the high-risk areas are the Response Teams and the DA teams. There has been a huge amount of work undertaken to understand what is making these officers busy, from their workloads, to the number of incidents that are outstanding, through to how much time they spend on constants in custody etc. There are several streams of work EP have done to make them less busy, like Right Care Right Person, more cars and more tutors. EP are confident they have a strong narrative; the acid test will be what is said when they do the focus group. It is a positive picture with some risks.

11. Professionalism/Casey Review Update

- 11.1. NM presented the Professionalism/Casey Review update, there were 5 thematic areas of leadership, risk conduct and grievance, discrimination, specialist commands and resourcing and understanding communities discussed. Next steps include embedding activity as business as usual and monitoring progress regularly moving forward.
- 11.2. PBI mentioned the Victim Closure Document and asked if there were any plans to roll this out to all victims of crime and not just high harm crime victims. NM advised that she and Claire Heath were looking at this in order to see if it is something EP would want to adopt for all crimes.
- 11.3. SH raised a query from Darren Horsman regarding the deployable resources, which were one of the biggest issues identified by Casey, and the misalignment between what resources should be in CPT/LPT and those actually deployable at any one time. What assurance can be given that this is properly understood in Essex? AM advised he was happy to respond in writing in more detail to Darren Horsman, but briefly assured that a full realignment has been completed with the Federation, and with the support of ACC Rachel Nolan's team there is now a one click platform to instantly see who should be on duty.
- 11.4. SH talked about the culture issues identified by Casey, in particular the piece around specialist teams and asked is the force confident they understand where local issues might be? AP advised he was confident in the process they have from the perspective of confidential reporting and that there is a culture of people calling out bad behaviour.

11.5. SH advised the PFCC was hoping for a further update on this to a future P&R board which is not scheduled at present. PBI agreed it would be helpful to continue to be sighted on the progress at an appropriate regularity.

Action 72/23

NM and SH to plan in further future updates to P&RS Board on the Professionalism/Casey Review and related work.

12. Approval for Publishing of Documents

12.1. There were no proposed changes to the publication status of the papers on the agenda. Paper 4 was marked official sensitive and would not be published. Papers 3i, 5i, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 were approved for publishing.

13. Any Other Business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 13:15 hours

Future meeting dates

- Thursday 25 January 2024 10.00
- Wednesday 28 February 2024 14.00
- Tuesday 26 March 2024 10.00