

## Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

### PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY BOARD

28 May 2024 10:00 – 12:30

#### Present:

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Kevin Baldwin (KB)	Assistant Chief Constable, Essex Police
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, PFCC's office
Alexa Fox (AF)	Head of Resourcing, HR, Essex Police
Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Suzanne Harris (SH)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny, PFCC's office
Richard Jones (RJ)	Head of Financial Performance and Reporting, Essex Police
Dr Natalie Mann (NM)	Head of Continuous Improvement and Analytics, Essex Police
Debbie Martin (DM)	Chief Finance Officer, 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 Pritchard (APri)	Assistant Chief Constable, Essex Police
Andrew Prophet (AP)	Deputy Chief Constable, Essex Police
Jeremy White (JW)	Finance Manager, PFCC's office
Helen Notman (HN)	(Minutes), Scrutiny Officer, PFCC's office

#### Apologies:

Ben-Julian Harrington (BJH)	Chief Constable, Essex Police
Fiona Henderson (FH)	Director of Continuous Improvement and Analytics, Essex Police
Claire Medhurst (CM)	Director of Kent and Essex Support Services

#### 1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1. RH welcomed all to the meeting and noted that NM was standing in for FH. 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

###### 60/23 Collaboration - CSP's

No update due until November 2024.

**Remain Open**

**02/24 POA**

Report amended and submitted for the meeting.

**Closed**

**08/24 Public Contact Performance and Response to High Harm Crime**

Report amended and submitted for the meeting.

**Closed**

**09/24 The Procurement Act 2023**

The Force had been fully briefed on Procurement Act and there were no identified issues to report other than implementing the change. There was a discussion about whether this could potentially be closed off today. However, PBI advised that herself & Darren Horsman would need to review this before the action was closed due to issues around publication and transparency. It was concluded that JP, PBI, SH & Darren Horsman would meet regarding this.

**Remain Open**

**12/24 Monthly Performance Report**

It was confirmed that Greg Myddelton already attends the Victims & Witnesses Board. AP confirmed that GM is welcome to commission items for the agenda. It was agreed to close the action.

**Closed**

**15/24 Public Perception Survey (SMSR)**

No update due until August 2024.

**Remain Open**

**16/24 Forward Plan**

The Productivity Review had been moved to June on the Forward Plan. It was subsequently proposed to move this to July and this would be discussed under the next agenda item. It was agreed to close the action.

**Closed**

**17/24 Monthly Performance Report**

Meeting to take place between Jen Housego and JP on 3 June 2024 to discuss how to bring in more of a focus on the Cyber Crime aspect of Priority 8.

**Remain Open**

**18/24 Monthly Performance Report**

GM confirmed that the Joint Education team are now up to full strength.

**Closed**

**2.3. Forward Plan**

- 2.3.1. SH had a request from Darren Horsman to add the Police and Crime Plan Closure Report to the meeting in June. This was agreed.

**Action 19/24**

**Add Police Closure Report to meeting in June.**

- 2.3.2. SH outlined a request that the productivity review be moved from the June meeting to July. AP agreed as it was a substantial piece of work that would take the Force until then to complete. JP suggested that it would be useful to have this as a budget setting workshop, if this was not going to be part of the June Strategic Board agenda, to ensure that the PFCC were fulfilling their compliance issues around this. RH agreed that it would be useful to hold this workshop before it was discussed within a board meeting.

### **Action 20/24**

**The Productivity Review to be moved to July P&RS Board Meeting on forward plan.**

2.3.3. The next suggestion was to add the Procurement Update on to the July meeting. It was flagged up that this would extend the meeting to 2.5hours. It was agreed that it would be moved to the July meeting, but with a workshop in advance. SH to advise attendees of extended length of meeting.

### **Action 21/24**

**Procurement update to be moved to July P&RS Board Meeting on forward plan. SH to liaise with attendees to extend July meeting to 2.5hours.**

2.3.4. SH said there was a proposal from Darren Horsman regarding the force's Public Engagement Strategy, which was requested to be added as an agenda item to the P&RS board meeting in August, as a result of conversations at the Towards Excellence conference. This was agreed.

### **Action 22/24**

**The Public Engagement Strategy to be added to the forward plan for August P&RS Board Meeting.**

## **3. Finance**

### **3.1 Monthly Finance Report**

3.1.1 DM advised this report sets out the provisional outturn, highlighting the changes from the Month 12 position. It was good news in terms of the provisional outturn underspend being £3.073m against the 2023/24 revenue budget of £363.7m. The money from the Home Office in April had a large impact on this. There was a recommendation to place £0.7m in earmarked reserves for specific purposes, which would result in the contribution to General Reserve reducing from £3.073m to £2.373m if approved. The Force then requested approval of an appropriation of £0.5million to the Transformation Reserve for expenditure linked to Welfare, Wellbeing and Workplace Improvement Proposals, and £0.2million to the Insurance Reserve to mitigate any material impact resulting from future insurance claims, in line with Auditors suggestion. The report requests approval of the year end balances on earmarked reserves of £14.703million and the general reserve of £12.622million, which is 3.5% of the 2023/24 force budget of £363.7m (3.3% of the 2024/25 force budget of £385.5m).

3.1.2 DM explained that the revenue forecast underspend was at £1.735m, which was good news. This does include the PUP money, having achieved the figures required for this, but it does not include the Op Hazel or Op Ivy reimbursements. Capital underspend is £5.668m.

3.1.3 In terms of Police Officers, there was a planned overspend of £3.5m, which was compensated by a large underspend on police staff pay of £2.8m. The Force was slightly overspent on Pensions, which was due to the Pensions increase at the beginning of the year, but which had now been rectified for 2024/25. There was quite a large overspend on Supplies and Services, but this was predominantly to do with Insurance. Grants within Income appeared to be a large overachievement, but in actual fact PUP was the main spend there. Plus, the Op Hazel and Op Ivy reimbursements. Along with the appropriations discussed this would leave £3.1m. Adding the £700k to this, reduced the underspend down to £2.4m. Premises was where there had been slippage, as referenced in the appropriations, the money would be placed in the transformation reserve so that the Force can draw down on this in 2024/25. As fuel prices had reduced, so had transport costs. Supplies and Services were going up, but this was to do with the insurance overspend at the year end. The forecast was not quite as accurate as the Force

would have hoped. The appropriations total £3.6m, variance of £3.1m. RH summarised that the General Reserve is increasing rather than decreasing, which puts the Force in a better position for 2024/25 than expected. RH thanked DM for this report, expressing his thanks for good tight budget governance over the year. RH noted that there had been difficult financial challenges within the last year, particularly in terms of recruitment targets & pay increases, however it was clear that the Force have a good track record of managing their finances accurately and effectively, which should be clear to the Auditors that they have confidence in the Force's ability to match this to the forward plans.

**3.1.4** DM then discussed the Reserves. The Transformation Reserve had increased at the year end, but it was noted that all the reserves are being used for the purpose they were intended for. Only a few of these had required a bit of carry forward into next year for the Force to draw down where there had been some slippage. DM explained there was an underspend of £5.3m, with not much movement between the year end and month 13 of the outturn. The Capital Financing requirement was £10.395m, but the cash position at the year-end was actually an overdraft of £700k. It was concluded that this tied in with the Treasury Management Paper, but in terms of the variance of that £5m, it was spread evenly over the Service. Of the £5.3m underspend, £4.6m of that is slippage to be carried forwards and the other element is £1.1m underspend and £453k overspend. Lots of those were slippage going forwards, £498k is money that was ring fenced subject to approval, but where the bids never came forward to spend the money in the end. This had then all been updated within the 2024/25 Capital Programme. RH highlighted that the Forecast underspend amount implies very good capital and financial management, as often with slippage it meant the projects were taking longer and costing more. DM agreed and explained that those projects that had slipped were for good reasons. JP clarified that the £700k borrowing was for treasury management purposes (Cash flow purposes) and DM explained it was utilising the Force's overdraft. RH summarised that this was short term cash flow borrowing for cash flow purposes. RH thanked the force for providing the financial overview.

#### **4. Police Objective Analysis (POA) Report**

4.1 DM advised the report identified the 2023/24 outturn position for Police Objective Analysis (POA). Probationers at the College are in non-established posts and their costs will appear within local policing. The average numbers during financial year 2023/24 of non-established posts, are Probationers PEQF) 66 FTEs, Probationers (Police Now) 12 FTEs, Probationer PCs 58 FTEs, Student Constables (Investigate First) 22 FTEs. The Officer pay budgets are held against established posts and there are vacancies against established posts which are across all the operational policing POA lines. Due to there being a high number of probationers in non-established posts, which were recorded within local policing, this would exaggerate the spend in this area. In the majority of cases spend was larger because of the 7% pay award and PUP funding was greater in 2023/24. AP highlighted that the proposal to be ratified by the Force on 12 June 2024 is to create 130 established posts, which was the Force's annual training establishment. This was useful as it places staff where they are in terms of training. JP highlighted that it would be useful to show training capture. AP explained that there may be other areas the Force can draw out in terms of a productivity review, for example, a protected way to capture financial extraction of training. JW asked whether there was a reason that the Command Team Support overhead in Appendix A had significantly increased from £842k to £1.556m. RJ stated that he could provide this outside the meeting. DM explained that was part of the wider work going on in accounts, once we have got definitions we can put codes in place, because it is easy to say what we do in terms of external training, but more difficult to define it in terms of internal training. There was an overspend which related to Criminal Justice and Magistrates Courts, as there was a short fall of income there, and then the other area was Public Protection, which was related to slippage of a business case, but this was now in place and therefore will not have an impact on 2024/25. DM explained that the rest is very much as expected. DM then highlighted that the

central costs were allocated, which is why this varies from other POA returns, because these months at the year-end have to be apportioned.

#### **Action 23/24**

**RJ to provide JW with breakdowns of the overheads of the Command Team Support.**

### **5. Treasury Management of Outturn Report**

- 5.1. DM summarised the Treasury management outturn report, which revealed net borrowing at the end of the year was £5.83m, with the capital financing requirements of £26.56m. The Force had also had useable reserves of £27.33m. £5.83m was listed as short-term borrowing, which was quite a change from the previous year. Then there were net investments of £970k. DM explained that the Force was currently holding money for third parties, that had been seized under POCA and PACE at a total of £5.19m. It was highlighted that the Auditors had asked the Force to put this money in a separate bank account, however the Force was comfortable that they had a clear audit trail. DM then discussed the Proportion of financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream, where actual position for 2023/24 was only £0.839m and in 2024/25 the Force is looking at 0.47% going forwards. The Force had included this in the medium-term financial strategy papers which go to the Strategic Board Meeting. So that as the Force move into a position where they are going to need to borrow externally for the Capital side of things, the Force would be able to see the impact of this on their revenue streams. DM concluded by saying that the Treasury Management Strategy was working well and making a big difference. JP highlighted that the report illustrates that the Force made good decisions in terms of keeping POCA and PACE money within the budget, as it had saved money on borrowing. RH agreed and said it was positive that the Force was able to take that money out of the hands of criminals and off the streets, and should it need to be paid back the clear audit trail would allow the Force to do this. JW wished to add a positive comment that there were only two instances of short-term borrowing, which was impressive.
- 5.2. AP then highlighted that he had asked DM to have a discussion with Hertfordshire Police about how they had funded their HQ investment. Herts planning assumption for this was that they would spend circa £65m capital project costs and were prepared to borrow up to 5% of their revenue budget. AP was pleased to note that Essex Police were nowhere near that, but Herts position allowed the Force to think through what they can reasonably afford over 40-50 year borrowing and investment, with the plan to bring some of that data forward to a workshop. RH clarified with DM the financing costs were a percentage of the Force's net revenue budget. DM explained that it was Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) in the interest. RH stated to AP the Force would need to think of having a double constraint. One of how much the Force was actually prepared to borrow as a percentage of the net revenue budget overall and how much the Force was prepared to spend on borrowing net revenue as well. One being much lower than the other. RH felt that the Force would not want to get to 5% figure of the Net Relevant Expenditure (NRE) spent on servicing debt debit, but it would be useful to get an external benchmark on this. AP agreed that it was helpful to know what a strong position the Force is currently in because of its historical lack of borrowing. JP suggested that she could pick this up with some of her colleagues on Police and Crime Commissioners Treasurers Society (PACCTS) group, but that it would be useful to have two measures, with the total borrowing as a percentage of the total assets, rather than as a percentage of the revenue. RH added that it would also be useful to see the total borrowing as a percentage of NRA as well as a subset of assets. DM highlighted that there were lots of indicators that the Force could pull off in order to enable comparisons with other Forces.

#### **Action 24/24**

- a. **AP to get external benchmark on percentage spend of revenue budget for HQ project.**
- b. **JP to discuss with PACCTS colleagues.**

## **6. Performance Reports**

### **6.1. Monthly Performance Report**

- 6.1.1. NM presented the monthly performance report explaining that there were no grading changes proposed. The priorities were showing as four at good, seven at adequate and one at requires improvement. There were no significant changes in performance, except with possession of drugs which showed a statistically significant decrease. Key headlines showed that there was a decrease in All Crime and Rural Crime in the 12 months to April 2024, compared to the 12 months to April 2023. This reduction has been driven by changes to Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) in relation to Stalking and Harassment, as well as a reduction in unique victims and decrease in incidents reported to the Force.
- 6.1.2. Priority One; investment in crime prevention remained graded as Adequate. There had been a 7.3% reduction in all crime for 12 months to April this year than the previous year. This was larger than had been seen recently, but was slowing, which showed a promising trend. ASB remained low, although this was creeping back up to above 1000 incidents a month. Rape offences charged figures were still below last year, 103 compared to 73 this year.
- 6.1.3. NM highlighted the organisational changes which had now taken place with the Contact and Control Centre (CCC) which was previously FCR. In terms of 101 demand there has been a 17.9% reduction for 101 calls, which was a slightly smaller reduction than in recent months. The combined 101 figure was not yet available for 12 months, but the figure for April was 61,400. The 101 abandonment rate was 23.7% for April which was slightly higher than 21% in March, but was similar to previous months. The combined abandonment rate for 101 was 26.8%. The average contact and control centre wait time in April had decreased by just under two minutes when compared to April 2023.
- 6.1.4. Priority Two; Reducing Drug Driven Violence remained at Good. There has been very little movement in drug driven homicide statistics, with one fewer than last year. There had been a 7.4% decrease in violence with injury, which was slightly lower than the last few months. Knife enabled offences were down by 5.5% for the 12 months to April this year compared to last. OCG reductions had reduced year on year, but the Force were comfortable with the reasons for this and felt that it was reaching a plateau, with overall disruption still high compared to previous periods.
- 6.1.5. Priority Three; Protecting vulnerable people remains at Adequate. Domestic Abuse was down by 12% which was stable, and repeat domestic abuse victims down by almost 14%, which was an improvement on last month. Solved offences were down by 14.4%. This month the Force were pleased to report a year-on-year increase in the use of Domestic Abuse Orders. DVPNS had increased by 8.9% and DVPOS had increased by 5.7%. CSA offences were down by 7.5% and CSA solved rates were down by 15.1%. This was a noticeably larger reduction than in recently reported periods, although it does tend to fluctuate more than other measures.
- 6.1.6. Priority Four; Reducing violence against women and girls remained Good. Violence Against the Person (VAP) offences committed against females decreased by 13.8% which was much lower than in the last reporting period, but more in line with previous periods. There was also a 11.3% decrease in the number of sexual offences committed against females, which was again lower than the last reporting period, but in line with previous reporting periods. Sexual offences solved rates had increased by 3.9%, which was higher than the last reporting period, but still noticeably lower than previous reporting periods where the Force had seen an increase by as much as 15.6%.
- 6.1.7. Priority Five; improving support for victims, was still graded as Requires Improvement. Offences with a repeat victim were still reducing and down by 17.8% in the 12 months to April

and it still continued to reduce at a faster rate than all crime. Individual repeat victims also reduced by 11%, which was stable, if not slightly better than recent reporting periods. The length of high harm investigations was at 64.1 days in April, which was lower than recent reporting periods, but continued to be higher than the 12 months to April last year. Referrals to victim services had reduced by 7.5%, which was a slightly higher decrease than previous periods.

- 6.1.8. Priority Six; Protecting rural & isolated areas remains at Good. Rural offences have reduced by 6.3% and this was stable. Solved offences decreased by 4.9% and the harm score remains lower than overall crime harm for Essex Police.
- 6.1.9. Priority Seven; Preventing dog theft remained Good with little change in this area with 6 fewer crimes for 12 months to April this year compared to last year.
- 6.1.10. Priority Eight; Reducing business crime, fraud and cyber crime remained at Adequate. Business crime continued to increase and was now 9.4% higher for the 12 months to April 2024 compared to the 12 months to April 2023. This was primarily driven by an increase in Shoplifting offences, which made up 52.1% of business crime. Shoplifting levels were now higher than they were the year prior to COVID. There had also been an increase in business robbery, which had added to the overall increases as well. In the 12 months to April 2024, all theft offences rose by 4.2% (1,958 more), compared to the 12 months to April 2023. This had primarily been driven by increases in shoplifting (1,909 more), theft of a vehicle (608 more) and Residential Burglary (224 more). Since April 2021 offences had been increasing and it did appear that a 'new normal' range has been established in recent months, but 447 more business crime offences had been solved. Business fraud had been showing an increase year on year in the last reporting period, but now had decreased by 5.8% in the 12 months to April 2024.
- 6.1.11. Priority Nine; Road safety remained at Adequate. There was a 1.4% decrease in the number of KSI incidents in Essex for 12 months to April 2024 compared to 12 months to April 2023. This was lower than last month's reduction of 4.9%, but was still reducing consistently since June 2023, except for an increase in December. All types of KSI reduced by 7%. After reporting an increase for the past three periods in the number of drink drive offences, this had now reduced by 1.5% in the 12 months to April this year. There had been a 13.7% increase in mobile phone offences in the 12 months to April this year.
- 6.1.12. Priority Ten; Community support & volunteers, remained Adequate. Membership to volunteer groups continues to be healthy. One volunteer had been lost from the business group and about 150 had been gained across all other groups, mostly in the horse rider volunteers, where there has been an increase of 92. Cadets and cadet leaders increased for the second reporting period in a row.
- 6.1.13. Priority Eleven; Supporting officers & staff remained Adequate. Officer numbers were at 3,805 in March 2024, a decrease of 7 over the last year. However, Ethnic Minorities as a percentage of the workforce continued to fall. There has been a slight decrease of 0.08% in proportion of ethnic minority employees in April 2024, compared to March 2023, which equated to 8 fewer employees. Ethnic minorities were under-represented and declining compared to Essex's population (11.2%). Staff and PCSO vacancies have increased. Officer, staff and PCSO sickness increased ever so slightly, but was much lower than previous reporting periods.
- 6.1.14. Priority Twelve; Increasing Collaboration remained at Adequate. Audience numbers have reduced by 592 in the 12 months to April, which was a change of direction from recent period, where it had been an increase of around 1,000 year-on-year. The joint education team had been focussing a lot of their efforts on the offer to pupil referral units and vulnerable children, as well as refreshing cyber safety inputs.

- 6.1.15. RH thanked NM for that comprehensive report. RH recognised the good news that lots of priorities were going in the right direction. ASB was still much better than where it was before, but the Force still needs to continue to drive improvement. RH recognised the drug related homicide figure at zero in the last month was amazing, and a huge difference from where the Force was five to seven years ago. RH asked whether the Force was bucking the national trend in this, and whether there was any good practice such as the overall approach, or close partner working that the Force could share, or whether the bleed kits that had been distributed around the County were helping to prevent deaths by stabbing? RH stated it would be useful to have an insight into what the Force believe had been effective in this area. AP responded that the Force is definitely moving in the right direction in this area, the Force will have to wait and see if this is sustainable, but the investment by the PFCC of 80 officers dedicated to dealing with county lines, violence, drugs and high harm, as well as the investment in partnerships and the improvements in medical interventions will have all had an impact. Analysis of the impact of the Force's approach on this would be through the work of the Violence and Vulnerability Unit.
- 6.1.16. RH then asked about the number of cases solved in rape & serious sexual assault, which was reported as an improvement, but looked like less cases were being solved, so the figures were down by 3.9%, rather than up by the same amount. AP explained that solving rape offences continues to be challenging. This was against a backdrop of a 10.5% reduction and a strong approach in crime data recording. Currently there were 71 charged offences of rape in the last 12 months compared to 103 in the previous 12 months, so clearly this was a decline in the number of outcomes. There were 43 rape cases currently sitting with the CPS. AP highlighted that this continues to be an area of focus for the Force and the CPS, but that there is a range of issues going on there. This included capacity from the CPS side in terms of lawyers and their experience, as well as the quality and pace of the investigations coming through. The Force was averaging around seven cases a month, which would put the Force on course for about 8084, which is marginally higher than the rolling 12 months, but AP recognised that this was not where the Force would like to be on this. RH explained that he had met with the Director of Public Prosecutions last week and he was very clear about the fact that his directive to the CPS would be that they look to find more cases to take forward to the CPS, which would be more balanced in terms of evidence, but that they will need to work with the Force about continuing to improve the way case files are prepared. AP thanked RH for this update, which was really useful. He then highlighted the changes going on with CPS East of England, where two of the top three or four were moving onto new roles on promotion, but he recognised the importance of ensuring the partnership stayed strong despite these changes.
- 6.1.17. RH also questioned why there was a reduction in the number of referrals to victim support. He had hoped that if there were less victims, then there would be more time to focus on victims and therefore Officers would be in a better position to offer more support and thus gain more referrals as a result? AP explained that victim referrals had declined marginally, month on month, and were down 5.5% year on year. He had specifically tasked RN to look into this as the new operating model came in. The primary constraint was that GDPR requirements meant that the Force now had to get documented permission from the victim to refer them, and this was not being secured. AP suggested the Victims and Witnesses group alongside RN's public contact group would help to drive this forward, but recognised it was an issue, and could be why victim confidence remained lower than general confidence.
- 6.1.18. RH was pleased to see the rising trend in protection orders.
- 6.1.19. RH added that although the response to dog thefts had not seen the biggest investment it was good to notice that rates had reduced, and it was worth noting this good work.
- 6.1.20. SH raised the question of priority eight and reducing business crime. SH said that it was good to see a year-on-year increase in the solved rate, but she had noted that the trend line for the



solved rate in the last four to six months was actually on a downward trend. SH questioned whether this downward trend coupled with the steady increase in business crime, equated to a rating of adequate? RH agreed that to sustain this priority at 'good' the Force would need to improve this. AP responded that this was a fair point and the Force had been watching this carefully. With the 12-month trend, shoplifting had been the primary volume of business crime at the rolling 12 months, or a 19% increase in shoplifting at six months and 14% increase at three months, so it appeared that the increase was slowing. Business burglary, which was another important part of the 12 months, had a 5% increase, and in the last three months there was a 0.65% reduction. With business robbery there was a 50% increase in the 12 months, and at three months that reduced to 16%, so the Force was aware and pushing hard to slow that increase to get back to into the preventative space. AP highlighted that the Force were balancing the prevention and solving aspects of this but were watching this area carefully and had been pleased to see the increased rates appeared to be slowing, which the Force was taking as a positive sign. SH agreed that the PFCC would continue to observe these trends. SH then questioned whether businesses were supportive of the Force's measures to try to help them? AP explained that the Chief Constable was out today with Essex Chambers of Commerce talking about the important strategic link between Essex Police and their business partners. AP was unsure if there were pockets or areas that may be unsupportive, but that was not the sense that he was getting across the board. AP added that the Force would attend the volume places where the high harm thefts occurred and talk to them about practical security measures and CCTV with them, but he could look further into this if required. SH agreed that she was happy to take AP's view on this. RH then questioned whether the Force were implementing Operation Pegasus locally? AP explained that the Force already had their own strategy around focussing on the high volume locations, and the stores where violence happened or assessing who the volume shop thieves and town centre problem solvers were, so the Force had a people in place strategy, which the Force had cross-checked against Operation Pegasus, and found that it effectively covered the same things, which was what they had asked the town centre teams and CPTs to focus on. RH added that when visiting an Essex police station on Friday, there were 13-14 mug shots of the prolific repeat shoplifter offenders, which they believe were carrying out about 70% of the shoplifting happening in that area, so it was a question of focussing on dealing with the prolific offenders, rather than anything else. RH explained that the Officers at the police station were also very clear that it was not a cost of living crisis issue, it was a drug crime related issue. In fact RH reported that the Officers there had concluded a year long operation investigating a particular local shop and had retrieved two large sacks of cannabis. AP was pleased to hear that RH had seen this and highlighted that Robin Punt and the Media Team push out lots of good news stories like this, with a particular thread around shop theft on Facebook and Twitter that Essex Police have dealt with 35 different shoplifters. AP outlined to the meeting that, the Force had just received the latest confidence figures, which revealed that confidence had improved again in the last quarter, although not by huge numbers, but recognised that this was still positive. The three districts that were identified as outliers six months ago; Tendring, Castle Point and Epping had all increased between five to seven percent. RH stated that this was really positive news.

[SC and KB joined the meeting at 11:23](#)

## **7. PSD Annual Report**

- 7.1. SC presented the PSD annual report providing an overview of PSD performance for 2023/24. The year had shown an upward trajectory for recorded complaints. The number of public complaints and conduct cases had risen compared with the last three financial years. With continued national high-profile public scrutiny into the actions, behaviours and wrongdoing of police officers, this increase was predicted and indicates improved confidence in reporting. The increases seen mirror PSDs across the country and Essex Police are not an outlier in this respect.

- 7.2. PSD had been subject to significant investment and growth during the past two years, including the creation of a Prevention and Engagement Team to help support, educate and train the workforce, which aimed to change behaviour and reduce the volumes of conduct cases. Three additional investigators had recently joined PSD to create a new dedicated team to expedite cases which could be easily resolved. For example, nearly half of complaints are ones where there can be a quick resolution, such as Officers not turning up when they said they would. Only 1% of complaints are those which are service level unacceptable. Processes within PSD were also currently under review, with plans to bring cases which result in No Case to Answer being brought to a swifter resolution, by taking a more proportionate and risk-based approach, where considered appropriate. The PSD data dashboard allows the Force to see if there are certain complaints coming to certain shifts, so they can ask questions around this.
- 7.3. Allegations of misconduct continued to show a significant upward trend year on year. Of note, misconduct cases had risen from 137 cases in 2020/21 to 256 in 2023/24, albeit reporting levels of conduct had been consistent during the past 21 months. SC explained that the hope was that the new vetting APP alongside more vigorous recruitment processes would see less of the wrong people getting into the Police. The analysis in the report revealed that it was the younger less experience & LPA based officers that were getting the majority of the complaints. Primarily these were domestic abuse type cases that happen off-duty in private lives or offending against colleagues. Offences with the public were very low. Although 71.9% of cases result in No Case to Answer, out of the 151 cases recorded, 70 still resulted in minor breaches being proven and dealt with via the Reflective Practice Review Process. This was partly due to the fact that the indication test the Force apply at the beginning was really low, there only had to be a slight indication that someone may have done something wrong and then the Force were duty bound to investigate it. Final Outcome Cases percentages for April 2023 to March 2024 were: 51.21% dismissal without notice; 17.08% retired/resigned/would have been dismissed and 14.63% final written warning.
- 7.4. There were a total of 214 cases referred to the IOPC in the 2023/24 financial year. 60% were due to Death or Serious Injury (DSI) matters. All other categories are low in comparison, albeit the serious sexual offence referrals, which were still relatively high, considering how serious such cases are, and this was indicative of the current challenges explained within the report regarding violence against women and girls.
- 7.5. It was noted that the majority of complainants were made by complainants with 'white' ethnicity with the second group classed as 'unknown'. PSD continues to work very closely with the dedicated PSD Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to help promote confidence in the complaints system for people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and a recent video promoting the work of the IAG is about to be launched as part of a proactive social media campaign. There continued to be an ongoing focus to improve the 'unknown' category and a new QR code had been designed and implemented to encourage feedback, which included ethnicity as an additional information request.
- 7.6. There were circumstances where a review was not upheld, but minor oversights or organisational learnings were identified and shared with the Force. This was managed by PSD and shared with the Appropriate Authorities. The PSD Office Manager regularly engages with the PFCC review officers to talk through areas of concern to fully understand any recommendations made.
- 7.7. Current themes in PSD, in keeping with the national climate there were 50% live cases that were VAWG related (cases include domestic abuse allegations, inappropriate behaviour in the workplace and less serious sexual assaults on shift nights out). PSD had also seen a slight increase in excessive use of force cases (17 live). PSD works very closely with the Learning and Development Defensive Skills staff to ensure any themes, trends or learning is shared to help shape future training. Driving matters are also a theme (18 live), but it is believed that better and more effective working relationships between PSD and Driving School has led to more cases being identified.

7.8. JG thanked SC for this report, which was very comprehensive. JG congratulated the Force on the new performance dashboard, which may have been a long time coming, but having had a demonstration of the performance dashboard, found this really impressive at getting down to what shift, what people, and how often complaints were made against staff and had the potential to transform how the Force moves forward with this. SC agreed and explained that it allowed the Force to see where they need to focus their efforts.

7.9. PBI explained that she was aware of the first tranche of amendments to the performance regulations at the beginning of May, and asked whether there were further tranches expected? SC confirmed that tranche one around the setup of misconduct hearings was moving forwards. Tranche two was a change to vetting regulation 13, regulation 11 around suspensions and new performance regulations. In effect the Home Office have said it was all going ahead, but with the election coming up, depending on who got into power, this could all change, as the legislation will not be passed prior to the election. However, at the moment, the Force was still pressing on with these changes. SC added that having read the proposed changes, there were no game changers in what was being suggested, and the Force had already delivered against the reinforced standards. SC highlighted that the vetting aspects may benefit from being revisited, for example, with Regulation 13 it would have been useful if the Government made it easier to get probationers out of the organisation swiftly. RH agreed, and suggested that if the Force provided him with a paper regarding this that he could take this forward after the election. AP agreed that the Force would provide a personal briefing note on this.

**Action 25/24**

**AP to provide RH with a personal briefing note of potential changes to Regulation 13.**

7.10. RH asked whether if 68% of the total number of younger officers are being dismissed does this cause a challenge in terms of recruitment? AP explained that the Force model expects loses in the officer headcount for this reason and therefore included 23 vacancies. This equated to dismissing two or three officers a month on average, so overall the Force do not foresee there being a conflict between making the right outcome decision, as the uplift target would not be affected. RH thanked AP for that reassurance. PBI asked whether if there was that volume of misconduct by young officers, did this raise issues over the quality of training, or the quality of the people that the Force were recruiting? AP explained that this was definitely not an issue with the training provided as training in this area was better than the force had ever had, and vetting decisions were tighter than ever before. However, where the issues were around conflict of use of force, this may be due to high volumes of work, leading to capacity pressures, leading to corner cutting, that can lead to misconduct issues. They had found a high percentage of cheating in exams, so perhaps it was a systemic bias rather than issues with the people they are recruiting. JG agreed with AP that having looked into this at the PSD Quarterly meetings and focussed on whether there were any particular trends or issues with training and recruitment, it did appear to be a whole range of issues, but was definitely something they were keeping their eye on. SC added that Supt Chris Bradford had provided a comprehensive update on all of the training the Force delivers including managing conflict, tactful communication, honesty and integrity, but he suggested some of the long-term answers may fall under the next agenda item.

7.11. SH queried why the number of allegations received each year did not match the breakdowns of conduct cases, but they appeared to relate to outcomes rather than allegations? SC clarified that some of the figures are annual figures, and some of the tables were current live conduct cases, but in order to make this clear, he would take this away to ensure some extra content to explain this was added to ensure transparency.

**Action 26/24**

**SC to add extra content to ensure transparency around number of allegations matching breakdowns of conduct cases**

## **8. Response to the Recommendations from the Angiolini Enquiry**

- 8.1. SC provided a high-level summary that this enquiry was not reflective of Essex Police. It was mostly centred around the Metropolitan Police Service and their handling of Cousins that led to the broader questions around their processes. SC explained that there were 26 separate recommendations, if you break down the sub-sections. Essex Police are already compliant with 15 of these. The Force is working towards full compliance with six of these, and five the Force are not compliant with, purely because these were national recommendations that were reliant on national changes to vetting, or to changes the College of Policing guidance. SC concluded that the Force were in a strong place regarding the recommendations.
- 8.2. SC then provided an update on particular recommendations; recommendation one was important to focus on in terms of how the Force investigate indecent exposures. Essex Police have made changes that any masturbatory type exposure offences now go to CID or MOSOVO. The Force had been writing and devised new templates, guidance and operating procedures around how it managed offending that could be a precursor to more serious sexual assault. This ensured additional scrutiny in that area. Recommendation eight talks about psychological assessment for new applicants, which SC perceived could be a game changer in order to draw out misogynistic, racist or discriminatory behaviour, or just people who have the wrong qualities to be a police officer. There was also discussion about psychological assessments for firearms Officers, which Essex Police already conduct, although potentially this could be to a higher level.
- 8.3. SC discussed recommendation 14, which discussed positive culture for the elimination of misconduct, which are often excused as banter. Essex Police are really clear on this. All of the Force's training is very clear around this, that staff cannot excuse something as banter, that is in fact inappropriate unprofessional behaviour and the Force makes it clear that they will deal robustly with that. SC highlighted that there would be more demand on vetting as vetting would become more difficult and complex and the Force may have to revisit its vetting establishment if the response to the recommendations is going to result in lots of extra work. The Force would probably need to bring in at least one FTE just to handle and manage psychological assessments. The final thing to mention was the recommendation to conduct home visits before people join the police, nationally there were mixed views on this, with some seeing it as a barrier to recruitment from certain groups. This has been argued nationally about what Forces would be seeking to achieve with home visits, but the Force awaits a national position on this. RH thanked SC for this vigorous report.
- 8.4. RH then questioned if Essex Police are in a good position on this, considering more than half of their conduct cases are against women & girls, which highlights the work that still needs to be done. It is important to recognise that the Force have made a lot of progress here, but there is still more to do. Hopefully once the Force have delivered against all these recommendations then they will get to a point where they see better behaviour and reduced conduct issues with women & girls. SC stated that this was a point well made, but added that when there are misconduct issues, or staff were dismissed, the PFCC should take reassurance that the Force retrospectively go back over vetting to assess the risk, and to date there has never been any sign in their vetting that the Force had taken a risk in employing that individual, so the Force had a very low appetite for risk here. However, there was probably technology that could be used to make vetting more effective. SC recognised that RH was correct, that misconduct was still going on, so clearly there are some areas that are not working as well as Essex Police would like. The Force recognised that they need to continue to focus on this. AP wished to reinforce the point that the language was really important here, that the Force was not where it needed to be, despite some of the really strong systems in place, and the Force recognised the sense of no complacency around this, and that the job is not yet done. SH highlighted that within the report there does not appear to be a full update on some of the recommendations that are not currently met. For example, with recommendation one, does the Force know when it expects to be fully compliant and will this meet the deadline of September 2024? SC explained that some of this was reliant on the national app being delivered. Currently there is not a national app around all sexual offences.

There is for serious sexual penetration and rape offences, but not for indecent exposure. So Essex will have its own procedures, guidance, tool kits, training and everything in place by September, but there might not be a national app by then that actually defined how these investigations are managed. SH clarified that it was possible that if work around this at the national level does not happen in time, then Essex Police will be in a similar position as other forces? SC explained that there was always a degree of subjectivity in these as it is a self-assessment, so the Force may perceive that they are compliant based on everything they have done, but ultimately it was down to whether HMICFRS agreed with this. RH added that if it would be useful for the app to be developed at a greater pace, or this was anything that the PFCC could lobby the MPCC about then a personal briefing note would be welcomed, or RH was happy to raise this at a national level if that would be helpful & the Force could provide a briefing paper around this if necessary.

#### **Action 27/24**

#### **AP to provide briefing paper for RH re lobbying around the national app proposed for sexual offences**

RN joined the meeting at 11:44

8.5. SH then asked what the Force's current position around the back log of vetting checks was. SC explained that the Force was currently in a strong position. Things have moved forward since the report was written. The Force had taken a risk-based decision in a very small number of cases to recruit officers subject to vetting clearance, because there were national backlogs and challenges that meant the Force were not going to meet their PUP uplift, and they had something like five failures in 10 years. The Force have now changed their position on this because of this report and will no longer start anyone until they have got the recruitment, vetting and security clearance. SH questioned whether this had affected the length of time it was taking for staff to start, but SC felt that this was not the case because they had good links with HR, recruitment and vetting, the Force can see what needs expediting and there has been an improvement in national turn around, meaning it is taking weeks rather than months. SH thanked SC for this update.

APri joined the meeting at 11:53

8.6. SH asked whether there were any complexities around recommendation 12, which related to police officers and staff being held to a higher level of accountability and behaviour. SC explained that the Force were looking for national clarity around this. HR, Media and Legal were considering how best to address the recommendation, it was felt that the Force do a lot of this already, in terms of training and recruitment but national clarity would be useful. SH added that the recommendation talks about appropriate resources dedicated to supporting the complainant and asked whether it was felt that this was holistic support and how proactively this was offered? - SC stated that there is a welfare officer policy, and that everyone is assigned a welfare officer, which included regular audited contact with welfare support. RH thanked SC for this.

SC left the meeting at 11:55

#### **9. Compliance of Essex Police with its Statutory Duties under Sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004**

9.1. KB explained that the document Working Together to Safeguard Children was published in December, it had not lead to significant change within the Force, the Lead Safeguarding Officer was the Chief, and the Delegated Safeguarding Officer as the ACC. KB highlighted that one of the key things was the training and ensuring officers were accredited so that they can perform this role. There had been challenges in this because of the huge amount of new staff, but it was felt that this was moving in the right direction. KB highlighted the implementation of the Aware principles that the Force have adopted, and that these provide guidance for all officers in terms

of how they record children interactions. One of the biggest challenges as a Force was missing persons, and children accounted for over 70% of all of these, and a large amount of resources are required to find them. It was felt that partnership work with ECFRS could assist with this, as well as the training to officers.

9.2. KB talked through the establishment of a force wide Child Protection and Safeguarding Board chaired by the Head of Crime and Public Protection, which had been set up in anticipation of an HMICFRS inspection which will be examining the Force wide response to dealing with children. This is not just about the investigation of child abuse or child protection and the results of the Inspection will inform future areas of work and focus for the Force around safeguarding of children. As part of this there had been some refreshed guidance on information sharing. There are three authorities working together within Essex, they are currently working through a pilot period over the next six months of a slightly different way of doing this to improve it. KB highlighted that they were catching more people, which was why they had been declared the best in the country, but because they were catching more people this increased the workload in terms of putting people on the register, which was currently at around 2,400, which was a significant increase in the last five to six years. This would inevitably cause challenges about how this would continue to increase in the future and how the Force managed this. RH thanked KB for this update and asked what the time frame for completing training would be, as 41 out of 134 still needed to complete this, and whether the Force had the resources that they needed for the additional regulations coming their way? KB expanded that the training had changed nationally, that there was a new course beginning in the autumn, that Essex Police had been a pilot force for this so had already trialled this. KB highlighted the challenge with these courses, is that officers had to be an accredited Detective to undertake SKYDIP, which caused challenges. So despite making great strides with the numbers of Detectives within the Force, there was a higher attrition rate of Detectives because they tended to be older and leave to go into specialist departments, so there would need to be an ongoing cycle of this training, but the volumes of Detectives coming through the system would accelerate faster. This meant it was difficult to provide a specific time frame, but KB was able to confirm that the Force was on schedule to deliver as close to their full number of Detectives as they could within the next two years. KB felt that the biggest challenge was MOSOVO and managing offenders in the future. MOSOVO officers had different training, this was quite a complex landscape, but Learning and Development are offering those courses. KB felt that rather than simply throwing staff at the problem, it would be useful to look at different ways to manage people including with electronic monitoring, and how technology could assist in some areas. One of the biggest challenges was Probation, because the Force were finding that they were picking up lots of gaps in service nationally because Probation had withdrawn some of their work in this area, meaning areas like risk assessments had not been done, so the Force end up picking that work up. RH thanked KB for his work on this.

9.3. AP added that this was KBs last Performance and Resources Board meeting before leaving his role and wanted to pass on his thanks for the contribution he had made. RH added an enormous thank you to KB for this contribution he had made both here and for Essex Police, and wished him well in the future. KB said it had been a pleasure working with everyone, and that hopefully in his four years in role he had improved things and would hand over to ACC Lucy Morris to carry this forwards.

[KB left the meeting at 12:06](#)

## **10. Use of Force/Stop and Search**

10.1 RN highlighted the focus of better understanding of disproportionality both in terms of Essex residents versus visitors and how the Force recorded this. The Force were still finding recording was an issue, in terms of getting officers to complete the use of force forms. The Force had found that improved scrutiny & feedback had led to an improvement in stop searches forms being completed. SH said looking at the use of force in custody appeared to have gone up, and wanted to understand

why that might be? RN explained that this was difficult to assess because of the historically low number of forms received regarding this, so it could just be an increase in the number of forms being completed. RN stated that her approach with this was to continue to monitor to see if it was related to improved compliance in terms of recording, or whether it was an emerging issue about changes in practice or behaviour. SH then said looking at the stop and search figures the dip sampling showed that despite the briefings in relation to authorities, the Force could do better. SH questioned how this might be improved, although she recognised that stop and search was in a much better position than it was, but that there did appear to be a downward trend overall, which was opposite to the use of force. RN stated that the use of force remained fairly consistent, but that the submissions had increased. Stop and search had not had the same reporting issue, so had actually experienced a slight decline in the stop and searches. This happened for a number of reasons, which included abstractions from proactive policing, less proactive patrols and stop checks, and increased supervisions in custody. The Force were aware that their stop searches had decreased, but that this was not a concern because the outcomes are still strong. RH then asked what the longer-term trend for stop and search is across the County and how that compared with pre-covid levels. RN said the Force would be happy to incorporate the figures into the report, or provide an update on this after the meeting. RN then clarified that the Force knows that their stop searches are better targeted and with a better evidence base than they were pre-covid. RH requested a longer term analysis showing where relative to this peak we are. RN highlighted that the reporting process had also changed, but agreed to add additional context into the next report. PBI clarified that presumably if the stop and searches were better targeted, then the proportion resulting in a positive find had also increased? RN confirmed that yes, that was the Force's understanding. RH then asked about the disproportionality aspect and positive outcomes, asking whether since this was quite complex, would it be possible to simply have a table that says these are the percentages of positive outcomes by ethnic heritage. RN explained that young people were more disproportionately affected by these issues, which is why they had included ages in their figures, but they could also provide totals. RN said she would discuss with NM as to how this could be presented better but did explain that the data was very challenging around this.

#### **Action 28/24**

**RN to provide a long-term analysis of stop search figures and additional context in the next report. RN to provide in the report a table with the percentages of positive outcomes by ethnic heritage and to discuss with NM how to better present this data to make it easier to understand.**

### **11. Public Contact Performance and Response to High Harm Crime**

- 11.1. RN shared an overview of the report around Performance of the Contact Management Command. She explained that this was the last report that would contain terminology around FCR and RC because these had as of 2 April 2024 been replaced by the new CCC and the Assessment Investigation Centre, and that colleagues would be welcome to come and see these changes in practice. RH enthused that he would be keen to do this. SH highlighted that the longest wait times for 999 calls appeared to be increasing, with the longest wait time of over 16minutes, which appeared longer than the longest wait time for 101 calls. RN explained that the change programme had resulted in some issues, including a number of outlier calls that did not waterfall through the system properly, leading to longer wait times. RN also highlighted that there were different types of 999 calls and the Force always prioritised calls from the public rather than partner calls (other blue light services). SH clarified that going forwards the Board would be able to compare new data from the Target Operating Model to data from the previous model? RN stated absolutely and explained that the only slight gap would be in the next report the Force would be reporting on all 999 calls and all 101 calls, rather than separating out the FCR and RC data.
- 11.2. RH asked how quickly were we likely to see an improvement based on the implementation of the new TOM? RN explained there had been clear improvements already. For example, the Force were upskilling all staff to undertake all calls, in order to improve performance. This was not all in place



on 2 April when the system went live, so further performance improvements should be seen once this training had been completed. RH then questioned how the live chat fits in with TOM? RN explained that when the live chat was initially launched it was 7am-11pm and was popular with the public. This was then paired back and usage had since dropped quite dramatically. The plan was now to try and divert people back to this and from 4 July 2024 the Force would go-live with 24/7 live chat. The issue around this was the lack of capacity in the control room previously, whose primary function was to take calls from the public, which therefore reduced the live chat function.

- 11.3. SH then asked about whether the PFCC should be concerned about the downward trend on the response to high harm incidents? RN explained that due to the significant work around additional resource availability and general metrics in call handling in response incidents that had occurred in this area she would expect this to increase.

## **12. Homicide Scrutiny**

- 12.1. APri provided an update on Homicides in Essex, including analysis of Homicide trends as well of an assessment of Homicide prevention activity and investigation performance. APri outlined that the homicide trend continued to decrease. APri explained that the Force were never complacent with their homicide trend, but that this had continued to track down and rates were currently at their lowest quarter since 2019 and certainly in the last 5 years. APri stated that the paper underlined the good work going on around the four strands, especially with county lines, and the reduction of these. APri highlighted that there had not been a county lines based murder for the last three years. RH thanked APri for his report, and explained that he recognised how much the Force had achieved in the area of reducing homicide. The fact that the Force was now at MSG average compared to five to seven years ago, where per population Essex Police were top five in country, which had led to the Home Office to become concerned about the high level of homicide in Essex.
- 12.2. RH acknowledged the current figures were amazing and it should be highlighted how well the Force had done with this. APri agreed with the view that it was also important not to get complacent, but as a Force they could be pleased with what RN and her team had achieved, and that HMICFRS had noticed this across Essex. SH highlighted how useful it had been for her to attend the Homicide Prevention Board that morning, which provided her with a useful insight, and she welcomed being able to attend that board.

## **13. Approval for Publishing of Documents**

- 13.1 RH advised that all papers were proposed for publishing, except 8 which was marked official sensitive. This was agreed.

## **14. Any Other Business**

- 14.1 There being no further business the meeting closed at 12:40 hours. with apologies for going over time. JP highlighted that for the next meeting onwards the PFCC would be producing a rolling 12-month forward plan.

### **Future meeting dates**

- Tuesday 25 June 2024 10:00 (Deep Dive at 14:00)
- Wednesday 31 July 2024 10:00 (Deep Dive at 14:00)
- Thursday 29 August 2024 10:00 (Deep Dive at 14:00)
- Tuesday 1 October 2024 10:00 (Deep Dive at 14:00)