

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY BOARD

31 July 2024 10:00 – 12:30

MINUTES

Present:

Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, PFCC's office
Ben-Julian Harrington (BJH)	Chief Constable, Essex Police
Suzanne Harris (SH)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny, PFCC's office
Megan Hiscock (MH)	Innovation and Vital Signs Manager, Essex Police
Julie Hodges (JH)	7 Forces Commercial Services, Norfolk Police
Darren Horsman (DH)	Strategic Head of Policy & Public Engagement, PFCC's office
Richard Jones (RJ)	Head of Financial Performance and Reporting, Essex Police
Richard Leicester (RL)	Director of HR, Essex Police
Dr Natalie Mann (NM)	Head of Research and Analysis, Essex Police
Debbie Martin (DM)	Chief Finance Officer, Essex Police
Claire Medhurst (CM)	ACO, Director of Kent & Essex Support Services, Essex Police
Lucy Morris (LM)	Assistant Chief Constable, 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
Jeremy White (JW)	Finance Manager, PFCC's office
Helen Notman (HN)	(Minutes), Scrutiny Officer, PFCC's office

Apologies:

Ch Supt Morgan Cronin (MC)	Continuous Improvement, Essex Police
Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Fiona Henderson (FH)	Director of Continuous Improvement and Analytics, Essex Police
Andrew Prophet (AP)	Deputy Chief Constable, Essex Police
David Levy (DL)	Director of 7 Forces Commercial Services, Essex Police

1. Welcome and Apologies

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

1.2. SH outlined that some changes had needed to take place with the agenda order due to the availability of CM. The original agenda order would remain within the minutes for clarity.

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. Minutes of June Deep Dive

2.2.1. The minutes of the VAWG and RASSO Deep Dive were approved and agreed.

2.3. Action Log

60/23 Collaboration - CSP's

No update due until November 2024.

Remain Open

09/24 The Procurement Act 2023

Paper presented at the meeting. See section 6 of agenda item 11.

Closed.

15/24 Public Perception Survey (SMSR)

It was suggested this cannot proceed until re-procurement was complete. FH believed the contract would run out August/September 2024 and Essex Police needed to ensure there was not a latent period. Due date previously updated to August 2024.

Remain Open – due date August 2024

24/24 Treasury Management of Outturn Report

a. The data has not been shared by NPCC to date. DM was still awaiting the data.

b. JP had emailed PAACTS technical team regarding this and was awaiting a response.

Open - due date extended to August 2024

28/24 Force Stop & Search

RN to provide long term analysis of Stop and Search figures and additional content in next report. RN to provide in the report a table of % of positive outcomes by ethnic heritage and to discuss with NM how to better present this data to make it easier to understand. This would be included within the next report which was due for the August 2024 PRSB meeting.

Remain Open – due date August 2024

29/24 Forward Plan

SH had updated the Forward Plan with the Status of the Specified Information Order for July.

Closed

30/24 Efficiencies & Savings Programme

FH to check figures for non-cashable savings for Specials. The figure represented was derived from one year saving from 2022/23 that did not make it part of 2023/24 budget setting, hence reported later once the Force had challenged and assured their own methodology. £1.8m saving was based on 69.6 Specials FTEs on average p.a.

Closed

31/24 Monthly Performance Report

FH to clarify whether an Athena reference or true reference was provided when incidents were reported online. The answer was “no”, a crime reference number was not automatically provided when incidents were reported online. The reason for this was set out in the separate attachment which was provided for the meeting.

Closed

32/24 Monthly Performance Report

SH had updated the Forward Plan for September with Victim Support/Confidence item. The Force agreed to bring a Victim Confidence paper (jointly written with GM) to the September 2024 meeting.
Remain Open – due date September 2024

33/24 Monthly Performance Report

FH to discuss with JP data on report and when the data cut off points are. This was resolved in the meeting. The disparity between the Performance report and the Closure Report was because of the date ranges used for each report.

Closed.

34/24 Monthly Performance Report

FH to provide a revised Performance Report which would include an amendment to explain the Cadet Leader numbers in the monthly report to clarify the data provided in this month and the previous months reports. Confirmed completed for this month, report included on slide 35.

Closed

35/24 Recruitment of Specials

AM to make contact with Rural Community Council of Essex to explore how they might be able to help promote Community Specials. Contact completed. CSCs to be promoted in Oyster magazine, Warbler newsletter & website, full page feature in Essex Rural Partnership monthly bulletin & speaking slot to present about CSC at Essex Rural Partnership AGM, and all newsletters have been provided for the RCF & NFU.

Closed

36/24 Crime Prevention Strategy

PBI & JG to discuss possibility of linking up with ECVYS & other partners including Essex Community Foundation and follow up results with ACC Nolan. PBI & JG had a date in the diary for this and would link in with RN.

Open

37/24 Police & Crime Plan Closure Report

On 4 July 2024 Essex Police submitted the FMS with a disclaimer on the front page to clarify when data was taken up to.

Closed

2.4. Forward Plan

2.4.1. SH advised that there were no proposed changes.

3. Finance

3.1. Monthly Finance Report

3.1.1. DM presented the 2024/25 finance report month three position for the Force. The revenue forecast overspend was at £2.065m (0.54% variance). Additional funding of £0.480m in relation to an overachievement of 2024/25 Police Officer Uplift was included in the revenue forecast. If the additional PUP headcount target of 10 was not met in full by the financial year end, the Force would forego the total additional funding of £0.480m rather than £48,000 per officer. The Capital financial monitoring position for month three was a forecast spend of £18.827m, which was a £2.367m underspend against the latest revised budget of £21.194m (11.2% variance). DM explained that the net appropriations from earmarked

reserves for month three were £0.809m. DM outlined the overspend on Police Officer pay, and allowances, excluding overtime and temporary duty allowance was £0.325m. The Police Staff overspend on pay and allowances, excluding overtime was £0.297m, which was unusual for the Force, but there was currently a 13% vacancy factor. DM noted the budget had increased regarding pensions, in relation to injuries. DM also highlighted the high demand on kennelling and fees in relation to dangerous dogs at £0.254m, which was a nationally recognised pressure, and this had become an area of interest, with the Force supplying information on this figure nationally. DM confirmed that the Force would be required to do some external borrowing as a short-term measure due to some of the expected capital receipts not being received.

3.1.2. JP wished to clarify whether the forecast was based on no changes being made, or whether the Force were expecting to end up with a deficit. DM confirmed that it was not a straight extrapolation, the majority of the overspend being overtime, however budget managers had been advised that they should not be forecasting on overtime budget, with the aim for them to manage their budget. BJH confirmed that the budget holders would discuss overtime directly with him. JP then questioned whether the aim with external borrowing from short term assets (treasury management borrowing) was to pay this back within the year and DM confirmed that it was.

3.1.3. JW highlighted that the vacancy factor, at 13%, appeared quite aggressive when that was set last year, and queried whether this was still seen as a realistic figure. DM replied that this was broadly off-set, with some departments with a rate of 13% and others like CCC having 0%. RL explained that the Force were very aware of this, that the police staff turnover had reduced, but that they were also awaiting the outcome of the police staff pay award. BJH added that there had been unforeseen costs that had placed pressure on the budget for the year, for example, as DM had highlighted with the substantial cost of dangerous dogs. BJH added that the funding arrangements for Essex did not sustain the ambitions that the Force wanted to achieve, or that the Government was setting out. That the wider funding challenge and growth versus grants received all affected the vacancy factor, and that there was no way to fund extra additional people based on the funding predictions that the Force had.

JH joined the meeting at 10:28

3.1.4. JG raised her concerns that the Force were having to pay out more for injuries of Officers. DM explained that this was on the pension claims coming through, and that these were related to injury pension claims coming through, in general these were PTSD related, rather than injury on duty. JG thanked DM for the report.

3.2. Police Objective Analysis (POA) Report

3.2.1. DM presented the report, following presentation of the original budget in POA format to the March Strategic Board, there had been a subsequent reclassification of Local Policing resourcing costs from Neighbourhood Policing to Incident (Response) Management. This had been carried out in response to a requirement to review how Local Policing roles had been coded under POA for national publications. It had been confirmed that the role of Local Policing Teams was predominantly Response, and therefore it was these posts that had been reclassified within the POA Level 2 categories. POA Level 1 was unaffected by the change. The amendment to the original budget had resulted in £63.769m being reclassified from Neighbourhood Policing (POA Level 2 – 1a) to Incident (Response) Management (POA

Level 2 – 1b), as noted in Appendix A. DM highlighted that because the Force had a 7% pay award alongside increasing pension contributions from 31 to 35, it appeared that the costs had massively increased. However, this simply reflected the pay costs across the board. BJH added that the Force had looked at the Government's commitment and mission to increase neighbourhood policing and that this format better reflected staffing levels.

3.2.2. DM raised that the meeting was RJ's last P&R meeting, and JG expressed her thanks to RJ for the significant work he had done.

4. Insurance Report

- 4.1. DM outlined the report explaining that the estimates for 2024/25 insurance premium increase for the Force would be expected by mid-September 2024. The motor insurance contract was re-tendered last year and had been good value, the Force were awaiting final confirmation of the breakdown for year two. Property insurance was in process of being re-tendered with the new contract to start on 1 October 2024. A nominal increase was expected to Airside cover. Annual claims costs revealed a continuing significant increase from last year's overspend with 31% change from previous year. The Auditors had highlighted that there should be more money in the insurance provision as the Force had quite significant overspends in recent years. DM added that Jenny Sale had now taken on the Head of the Insurance Team.
- 4.2. JG wished to clarify the average time that it was taking to resolve public liability claims. DM explained that Adrian Williams would be best placed to answer this, however, it had been noted that there were more claims coming in, so overall it was taking longer to deal with them. DM also highlighted that when the claims first came in the estimates were initially quite high but tended to reduce to 75% as they went through the process. JP questioned whether the Force had a good basis for the claims reducing consistently to 75%? DM confirmed that there was robust information on this, and that the auditors had not been able to come up with a better position on that.
- 4.3. JP then questioned whether the Force required insurance against cyber-attacks. BJH explained that the Force had been through the risk of data loss in terms of insurance and cyber-attack in great detail and concluded that it would be better to invest the money in cyber security instead to prevent that. The cost of the premium to insure everything would far outweigh any benefit the Force would gain. JP then raised the point about Independent Members, if there was to be a legal action by someone, would they still be covered as employees were within the Force's protection indemnity insurance? Discussion around this followed, and PBI suggested in the first instance that JP should raise this question with PAACTS colleagues to see if this had ever happened before and to then discuss the response with PBI to see if she needed to take this concern any further.

Action 38/24

JP to contact PAACTS to see whether other organisations had insurance in place to cover Independent Members and whether any Independent Members had ever had any action taken against them.

5. Performance Reports

5.1. Monthly Performance Report

5.1.1. NM presented the monthly performance report advising there were no grading changes proposed. The priorities were showing as four at good, seven at adequate and one at

requires improvement. Key headlines showed that there was a decrease in All Crime and Rural Crime. Business Crime continued to increase by 9.3% mainly due to an increase in shoplifting offences. Theft offences also rose by 3.3%, primarily due to shoplifting but also increases in vehicle theft and residential burglary. There was a statistically exceptional increase of 28.6% in theft from person offences in June 2024 compared to June 2023, but compared with previous 12 months there was a 3.5% decrease in the same period. There was a decrease in repeat victims, VAP offences decreased, but Essex Police solved 10% fewer sexual offences. There was a 9.0% decrease in KSIs and 19 fewer OCG disruptions. Officer numbers had increased overall to 3,807 in June 2024. Specials continued to decrease and as of June 2024 were at 245, 18.6% lower than the previous year.

5.1.2. SH wanted to know more about the new Chief Supt role and how that would work. BJH responded that they had selected two very good candidates out of eight, and Scott Egerton and Chris Bradford were both successful. Scott Egerton would take on a temporary role and would focus on the whole investigative process from start to end, looking at the whole system and process, with the aim to improve efficiency and effectiveness of investigations, and they would have a team working to them which would be an investigative improvement team, as part of the continuous improvement programme. The plan would be for them to go round all ten districts to help drive performance, through improving skills and capabilities on how to manage. It was expected that this role would take about 12 months. NM added that the Force had over the last month redeveloped a tighter set of performance metrics that would link into Mr Bradford's new role, allowing him to see where small gains had the potential to make a big difference, and the team would be working closely with Mr Bradford on this. JG responded positively that this was a great development.

5.2. Quarterly Performance Report / MSG Aspirations

5.2.1. NM presented the report and highlighted the continued downward trend in ASB and drug-driven homicides. There was an upward trend in violence with injury offences. DA offences increased overall since 2016/17, but there had been a downward trend since 2022/23. VAWG confidence had shown a slight improvement, with an upward trend since 2016/17, but a downward trend was noted since 2021/22. The long-term trend for rural offences was slightly increasing. There had been a slight downward trend in dog thefts. There had been a general increase in Business Crime offences since 2021/22. While KSI's remained stable. The number of Specials continued to drop. Sickness rates had increased.

5.3. Force Performance Against National Crime and Policing Measures

5.3.1. NM presented the report, noting the large increases in residential burglary. Essex Police would now be considered an outlier for vehicle offences. The proportion of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds continued to be below the national average. Violence with injury offences had stabilised in 2023. There had been a decrease in DA crime categories. Violence with injury offences stabilised in 2023. There had been a decrease in the number of offences involving discharge of a firearm, however offences involving ball bearings continued to increase.

5.3.2. SH raised a question about the Force Performance Framework, and the grade of service for 101 calls, which had increased from last month, which was positive, but the PFCC were conscious that it was still at 47.9% when the target was 90%. She also noted that the Force were also slightly below target for 999 calls and sought to understand whether the priority was focussing on getting the 101 grade of service up, or getting 999 up first? NM explained that both were a priority and the Force were continually working on, and the hope was that

once the TOM had fully embedded, improvements should quickly follow, but that this was a key focus for the Force. SH did say it had not been missed that there had been a 10% improvement from the previous month, which was positive.

6. Force Performance Framework

6.1. NM discussed the performance briefing, explaining that All Crime charged had increased in May 2024, that Op GRIP compliance had increased in May 2024, Weapon Stops had decreased both in May 2024 and over the last 12 months. Suspects Wanted had significantly increased, QA and Linking Allocations over 48 hours had significantly increased. The Force would be an outlier for vehicle offences, which was being driven by both theft of and theft from motor vehicles. NM added that all metrics in the report are subject to change due to the ongoing backlog with QA and linking queue which is being addressed by Op Recover. NM went through the six pillars explaining that Prevent was graded as 'good', Respond as 'required improvement', this was because the emergency response time was deteriorating and below the target of 80% at 72.5% and continued to fall, Investigate had deteriorated from 'good' to 'adequate' due to increases in outstanding suspects and consistent decreases in arrests, Building Trust and Confidence was graded as 'good', Our People was graded as 'good', and Operational Efficiency & Effectiveness as 'adequate'.

6.2. SH noted that within the operational efficiency and effectiveness, the time between the crime being recorded and being tasked to IMA there was a significant proportion taking over 48 hours, and SH wished to understand whether 48 hours was an appropriate category or whether that should be broken down further. NM responded that the Force were continually reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness, and there was discussion around that as a grading. There was a lot of work currently going on between her team in terms of data analysis and the CCC to understand those areas better, with a new report commencing that week to understand those key points. BJH added that some of those cases were up for over a week, and often that was to do with QA linking. He explained that 48 hours was an ambitious target, and was a key performance measure for the Force, in order to understand how investigations were managed and that this would link into Chris Bradford's new role and pushing the continuous improvement programme. BJH suggested that rather than providing a separate report for this area, he would prefer to continue to keep this within performance reporting in terms of holding him to account. The new performance pack mentioned by NM would feed into that. JG agreed that she was happy with that plan.

Action 39/24

NM to include additional information in the next Performance Pack to share findings of the analysis with CCC relating to crime recording times.

7. Productivity Review

7.1. MH presented the report outlining that in March 2024 the Force commenced an internal Productivity Review, which was intended to produce a summary of benefits realisation activity connected to themes identified within the national Policing Productivity Review. It was recognised that for benefits management to fully succeed it was essential to embed effective benefits management processes across all ranks and grades. Verified productivity generated within Essex Police was 219,975 hours, working towards an additional projected 91,352 hours. There were known projected non-cashable savings of £6,984,930. Currently the Force were not capturing the reinvestment of hours as part of the current standard benefits realisation process, but they did undertake some triangulation activity across the Force to understand where that time may have been spent. The team used the NPCC effective working hours calculations, for consistency and standardisation in their approach.

LM joined the meeting at 11:21

- 7.2. JG wished to understand whether this work would help internally as well as meeting the Home Office requirement? BJH wished to highlight the potential 280 FTE saving, which revealed the extra capacity there was within the system. The Force's methodology was strong and had been shared with the College of Policing productivity review team, however the hours and savings were nowhere near the Government's ambitions around growth. BJH then explained that it was important to focus on the quality of the time saved, rather than minimal amounts here and there. BJH outlined his concern that the non-cashable savings were great, as long as this was not used as evidence to reduce staffing levels as a result.
- 7.3. JP raised her concerns about productivity reviews being used as a platform for delivering expectations and visions, because she felt that within Policing, it was hard to measure productivity particularly in terms of prevention, and each Force would be in a different place regarding prevention. MH explained that having completed this work, the Force would now be in a positive position if and when it was compared to other Forces, because Essex Police had been proactive in this area.
- 7.4. DH asked whether there was any standardised methodology used for tracking and quantifying the efficiencies across Forces? MH responded that there was not, but that there was a national NPCC working effective hours methodology, which Essex Police had used for a number of years. MH explained that there was also a Home Office methodology, which was different to the NPCC, but that the Force hoped that with the development of the Centre for Policing Productivity a national standard that they could help inform may arise. JG thanked MH for her detailed and fascinating presentation and asked MH to pass her thanks onto MC for his work on this.

8. Vulnerable Groups

- 8.1. LM presented the report outlining the upcoming Child Protection inspection by HMICFFRS during the next reporting period. The annual report to April 2024 covered six areas. The Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders (MOSOVO) which saw a 23% decrease in the volume of notifiable offences allocated to MOSOVO, but an increase in the solved rate. There had been an increase in the number of total investigations, which was anticipated to be due to time frames for downloading and examination of devices, but the Force were monitoring that to ensure it did not impact on outcomes. LM discussed the significant vacancy rate in MOSOVO, which had priority posting from the resourcing panel, and noted that non-crime investigation made up a significant part of the MOSOVO work. The second area was Child Sexual Exploitation Crime and the total number of related investigations reduced significantly by 26.3% partly due to Op Haiti. The Police Online Investigation Team (POLIT) recorded offences increased again this year by 4.5%, with a significant decrease in the number of ongoing investigations by 28%. The NCA were introducing a new case management tool for Forces to obtain intelligence directly from NCMEC, which would have a significant impact on the Force. Thirdly within Child Sexual Exploitation, Criminal Exploitation and Missing in the last year to April 2024 there were 928 CSE crime investigations recorded. There had been 6,000 missing individuals, which was fairly static, with 60% of those being children. Protecting and Safeguarding of Children within last year to April 2024 there were 7,427 Child Abuse Crimes recorded and 911 Safeguarding non-crimes, which was a reduction. Under Mental Health there was a decrease in final call types, and Right Care, Right Person had a significant impact on this. There was an 18% decrease in STORM incidents. It was also noted that although Essex did not have a MASH set up as was the case in Southend and Thurrock, due to Andy Ward's hard work there was now agreement to embed resources within the Essex Family Hub as a pilot starting from September, which was a big step forward. JG thanked LM for her comprehensive report.
- 8.2. PBI made an observation relating to the proportion of children that went missing from care homes, because it had been suggested that Local Authority partners intended to increase the building of care homes, which could potentially increase this issue. LM agreed this was a concern and added

that children were often placed outside of the area they were from, so the issue was that they got pulled back to friends and family. LM highlighted the importance of Officers looking at MOUs with Social Care and with care homes to ensure that everyone was aware of their duty of care and working with individuals to reduce repeated missing episodes. LM hoped that by holding partners to account and applying the Right Care Right Person (RCRP) AWOL principles would help with this. PBI then asked whether some of the missing episodes might then result in vulnerable children being drawn into gangs and county lines activity, and LM agreed that this was where intelligence compliance was key, to ensure they found out who the children had been with and where they had gone when they went missing. JG was pleased to hear that RCRP guidance principles for children and young people were driving action in the right direction. LM explained that some partners had concerns about whether RCRP should apply to children at all, however, the Force had found the national guidance incredibly helpful because it supported their position, and the Force were aware of their responsibilities around safeguarding.

8.3. JP raised her concern that 13% increase in fraud was a concern. LM hoped that some of the increase was due to greater awareness and increased reporting but accepted that this was probably a combination of an increase in activity as well. LM confirmed that reporting was through Action Fraud and then the National Intelligence Bureau would disseminate packages where there were reasonable lines of inquiry. LM explained that fraud was a vast issue, but that the Force were using more account freezing orders around offenders, which was more likely to protect vulnerable victims.

CM left the meeting at 11:54

8.4. DH questioned whether those who were victims of fraud tended to have other forms of vulnerabilities as well, or whether they were just unlucky? LM explained that it was a mixture of both, as any of us could be victims, and Prevent and Protect work goes across the board.

8.5. BJH concluded by highlighting the hard work that had gone into the Essex Family Hub pilot by Andy Ward. That regarding fraud, Kent and Essex Police had good capability there because of the investments that the Forces had made in this area. BJH explained that although neighbourhood policing was delivering safety in neighbourhoods in the prevention work it carried out, that this would not count as neighbourhood policing, and that needed to be recognised in some of the funding challenges the Force had, that this type of work was at risk of being lost in order to provide beat officers, and yet it was very important.

9. Firearms Licensing

9.1. RN provided an update on Firearms Licensing performance in terms of service to the public. It was noted that there were significantly less certificate holders, and there had been a delay in the decision to increase fees leading to an increasing funding gap for the costs of running FSEL. Forces were currently awaiting decisions made by the new Government as to a potential increase in fees. In positive news the Force compared favourably nationally, with the Force remaining in a strong position. The resourcing picture for the department was that it was a relatively tightly run, with manageable workloads currently, but they did anticipate increased volumes in 2025, as this Department had a cyclical workload with the certificate holders that had previously gone through the Risk Based Renewal Process to minimise home visits, up for renewal again in 2025. A lack of training had previously been an issue for staff in firearms licensing, the College of Policing were looking at addressing that issue, but there was still no current timeline for training, although the expectation was for Forces to fund the training, which was expected to be around £1,500, which would further increase the running costs of FSEL.

9.2. SH noted within the report that Cyclops was on an end of life warning, but that no decision had yet been made on replacing this, and asked what the timeline was for this? RN confirmed that the

end of life warning was provided years in advance, with her personal view that the Force would most likely decide to move across to a cloud based solution. The Force were currently conducting due diligence as to the options around this, with the potential that Office 365 could fill this need, there was Cyclops online, but this was an expensive IT solution, but RN sought to offer the Board reassurance that this would be sorted in good time.

9.3. SH asked whether the change in Government would potentially delay the decision to increase the fees chargeable for certification. RN explained that the Force were lobbying on this, conversations had occurred between RH and the Home Office, and this was a live action for RH and DH for the PFCC to push this forward. BJH outlined that in terms of funding Essex Police currently faced an unfunded pressure of £703,527 as a result of application fees not meeting the cost of operating the service and that he would urge the PFCC in his lobbying of the new Government to change the legislation.

Action 40/24

RH to be updated on the importance of continued need to lobby the Home Office regarding the change in legislation required to increase fees for certification.

10. HR Sickness & Attendance Management & Staff Performance

10.1. RL outlined the report to update the Board that 56 FTE officers had joined the Force, with the total headcount now at 3813 as of the end of June 2024, which was three higher than the minimum PUP headcount required, but seven under the additional PUP recruitment requirement of 3820. There had been a higher proportion of applications from ethnic minority candidates than the previous five full financial years. It had been noted that the Force had its highest level of absence for this period over the last seven years. Staff absence for Q1 was 2.28, the highest level for five years due to miscellaneous related absences, specifically cancer.

10.2. SH requested further information on the increase in absences across Officers, Staff & PCSOs, RL explained that those issues had been picked up internally in advance of the report, and that anecdotally it appeared to be a national issue. The priority areas that were noted in the report were psychological, miscellaneous and musco-skeletal, things that the Force were unable to influence. It had been noted that more NHS operations were being completed post-covid, which was a factor in absence for operations and post-operative recovery. Of most concern to the Force was the psychological issues, although these were attributed to a range of factors, levels of stress and anxiety were particularly noted in the report. The Force were trying to ensure clear oversight of absence and as a result had increased performance reporting to include that in the monthly performance pack, and Chief Officers had accountable actions across all areas of the Force to influence the issues that they were able to, for example how managers could support individuals to return to work. RL highlighted the good wellbeing provision the Force had in place. Obviously, the increase in people suffering from cancer was outside of the Force's influence, and that was a long-term challenge, but that the Force ensured it supported its staff.

10.3. JG requested an update on how staffing and recruitment were progressing within the Contact Control Centre, with 40% of staff leaving, alongside a big recruitment drive. RL explained that the Force had anticipated the higher attrition rate, but that they had two ambitious intakes coming up on 19 August 2024 and then on 9 September 2024. The target was to reach the full resourcing levels taking into account attrition and to have everyone trained and operating in line with the new TOM by December 2024. There had been a lot of interest in the roles, but there were challenges with training staff and locations for this, however COG was aware of this and the CCC recruitment was a clear priority.

10.4. JG raised the question regarding the continuous improvement plan and the changes that had been made in terms of stopping the flow of people moving out of the local policing teams, and how

that change had been received by Officers? RL explained that the Force had to manage this sensitively with about 50 individuals being affected. That it would take time to see the benefits of this, but it would prevent large scale numbers of experienced Officers moving out of local policing. The Force were cautious of what posts were being advertised in order to maintain that direction. BJH stated that the Federation understood the benefits of the move and had publicly supported the change. Some individuals had complained, but the Force expected that over 12-24 months they would see a stabilisation of resources on local policing teams, which was where 70% of investigations occurred and where future policing skills came from.

11. Procurement Update

11.1. JH outlined the paper and explained the positive implications of the Procurement Act 2023 (PA 2023) was that there would be much more flexibility in the way the Force could carry out procurement activity with an increased ability to negotiate and engage with suppliers. The Force would be able to design their own procurement processes, as long as they remained transparent. The Force would be able to exclude poor performers from the process, and it would be able to encourage Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME's) and break down barriers so such companies could tender for more business. However, the negatives were the emphasis on transparency, and although Forces obligations would not go live until April 2025, there would be an added admin burden about publishing payments to contractors over £30k, because currently the Force were unable to link payments from SAP to specific contracts. Staff were now 75% through the training, with one super user, and an additional super user who would complete the training by the end of the week. CM explained from her perspective that the transparency obligations were much greater than the Force had experienced before. The Force were still awaiting further guidance about the PA 2023, as it was such a significant change, it was expected that obligations would be phased, and a lot of public sector organisations would struggle to comply with this, mostly because of technical issues. Although the Force was not an outlier for this, the Force's SAP system had limitations, and the Force may need to look at future developments around systems.

11.2. DH raised the point that in the paper there is talk about guidance being expected by the Government, and whether the Force had received that yet, or knew when it would? JH explained that she had attended a Bluelight commercial forum on the previous day, and both Bluelight and the Government Commercial function were producing training slides for stakeholders, which should be available by 2 August 2024. DL had attended training on this and was going to post questions within that group, about how public sector bodies were expected to manage this significant change.

11.3. DH highlighted that within the paper there was a discussion about there being implications for governance, in terms of technical challenges of publishing the payments, but would like more clarity around the implications of the governance of this? JH explained that the governance was relating to 7-Force's own governance and changes that they would need to make to their own working practices.

12. Transparency, Contracts and Tenders (plan for Statutory Compliance)

12.1. CM outlined the report, the publication of contract opportunities and awards were covered by two key pieces of legislation – the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information Order) (SIO) as amended 2011 and The Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) as amended 2015. Those required the publication of contract opportunities in defined circumstances and contract award information over £30k VAT inclusive in PCR, and £12k VAT inclusive in SIO. All procurement for contracts above £60k were subject to tender (unless an existing compliant contract/framework agreement existed) and managed by 7 Force Commercial Services (7FCS). 7FCS used an e-tendering system Atamis, to publish their tenders, which automatically

published onto the National Contracts Finder system. At this contract value Policing Bodies in the Eastern Region were compliant with their transparency obligations. Links to Contracts Finder were available on Force/PFCC websites. CM explained that now Atamis is up and running, the Force would expect it be used frequently by both the Estates and IT departments, who should be putting everything through the Atamis system, however only low volumes had been seen to go through since April 2024, despite non-compliance checks not coming back with any issues. CM wondered whether this was because a lot of the under £60k spend was linked to existing contracts, while acknowledging that SAP did not provide an easy way of reporting for this, but that they had expected a higher volume on this, and aimed to try and extract more information from SAP to reassure that the Force could see everything was going through the right system.

- 12.2.** DH asked to be directed towards the link on the Force website relating to contracts, and to be provided with the 10 latest contracts to reassure himself that the Force was compliant with the transparency element. DH also requested to know the outcome of the quality control checks that CM mentioned, to gain further reassurance around the processes being used, and to understand when full compliance was likely. CM requested a meeting with DH to look at where they were with this in three months, and to confirm at that point when would be a sensible time to report back to the Board to show where the Force had got to, in order to reassure RH in terms of fulfilling his legal obligations.

MH attended the meeting at 11:00

Action 41/24

CM/JH/DL to provide DH with the location of the link on the Force website relating to contracts, and to provide him with the last 10 contracts over £50k.

Action 42/24

CM & DH to meet in three months to discuss where Force had got to with compliance against the SIO and PCR. DH to provide an update to the Board following that meeting, and this would be added to the Forward Plan. DH would then advise when a full report would be provided to the Board, which would subsequently be added to the Forward Plan.

13. Approval for publishing of documents

- 13.1. JG advised only item 4 was official sensitive, all other papers were proposed for publishing. This was agreed.

14. Any Other Business

- 14.1. SH raised the point that the PFCC were currently using the Teams Channel to circulate the papers for P&RS Board meetings and asked whether members required the email to be circulated to advise them of the papers being uploaded or whether this was now unnecessary. There was unanimous agreement for the email to continue to be circulated to notify members the papers had been uploaded.

- 14.2. There being no further business the meeting closed at 12:36 hours.

Future meeting dates

Thursday 29 August 2024	10:00 (Deep Dive at 14:00)
Tuesday 1 October 2024	10:00 (Deep Dive at 14:00)
Tuesday 29 October 2024	10:00 (Deep Dive at 14:00)