

## Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

### PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY BOARD

29 August 2024 10:00 – 12:30

#### MINUTES

##### **Present:**

Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Suzanne Harris (SH)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny, PFCC's office
Claire Heath (CH)	Head of Continuous Improvement, Essex Police
Fiona Henderson (FH)	Director of Continuous Improvement and Analytics, Essex Police
Stuart Hooper (SHoo)	Head of Contact Management, Essex Police
Dr Natalie Mann (NM)	Head of Research and Analysis, Essex Police
Andy Mariner (AM)	Assistant Chief Constable, Essex Police
Debbie Martin (DM)	Chief Finance Officer, 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
David Wederell (DW)	Head of Financial Performance and Reporting, Essex Police
Jeremy White (JW)	Finance Manager, PFCC's office
Helen Notman (HN)	(Minutes), Scrutiny Officer, PFCC's office

##### **Apologies:**

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, PFCC's office
Ben-Julian Harrington (BJH)	Chief Constable, Essex Police
Rachel Nolan (RN)	Assistant Chief Constable, Essex Police

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

1.1. JG welcomed all to the meeting, apologies were noted from those above. FH explained that she would need to leave part way through the meeting and that NM would cover item four on her behalf.

#### **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 July Deep Dive**

**2.2.1.** The minutes of the Road Safety Deep Dive were approved and agreed.

## **2.3. Action Log**

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

No update due until November 2024.

**Remain Open.**

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

A short paper had been included as agenda item 2.2.2 of the August PRSB meeting to close this action. NM explained that she had worked alongside Darren Horsman and SMSR in order to make the most of the survey, with regular meetings with SMSR to ensure the product continued to deliver what was required. Prompt boxes had been added in to provide more information and questions had been added in. NM had also highlighted in the transcript the things that had not changed in order to ensure the Board were happy with the changes that had been made. NM explained that they would also be able to do a quarterly focus like a deep dive on particular subjects, as well as omnibus surveys, which is where SMSR could remove some of the questions that the Force do not rely on every quarter for tracking and instead add very specific ones, for example, if there was a local or national priority. JG and AP thanked NM and DH for their work on this and agreed that this seemed like a positive way forward.

**Closed.**

### **24/24 Treasury Management of Outturn Report**

- a. The APCC and NPCC Financial Survey was sent to the Force and PCC CFO's on 09/08/24. The email was from the NPCC and signed by the NPCC Finance Chair and APCC Finance Leads (Roger Hirst and Joy Allen).
- b. JP had discussed this with PAACTS technical team and confirmed the same information was contained in the survey.

**Closed.**

Following on from this action JP suggested looking into the financial survey with DM to better understand where Essex Police sat within this.

### **Action 43/24**

**JP to look into the financial survey with DM to understand where Essex Police sit within this.**

### **28/24 Force Stop & Search**

This information had been included in the chart of p17 of the report for the August PRSB meeting.

**Closed.**

### **32/24 Monthly Performance Report**

A paper on victim confidence is underway for the September PRSB meeting.

**Remain Open – due date September 2024**

### **36/24 Crime Prevention Strategy**

An amendment was requested to be made to this action to show that the follow up needs to be carried out with Rachel Brett, CEO of ECVYS, rather than ACC Nolan.

**Open.**

### **38/24 Insurance Report**

JP was awaiting a response from PACCTS 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.

**Open.**

### **39/24 Force Performance Framework**

This information will be included as data in the next Force Performance Framework Paper which is due for October PRSB meeting. It was agreed that the action due date would be amended to October 2024.  
**Remain Open – due date amended to October 2024.**

### **40/24 Firearms Licensing**

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. SH confirmed this had been completed.  
**Closed.**

### **41/24 Transparency, Contracts & Tenders (plan for Statutory Compliance)**

Provided via email, awaiting Darren Horsman's return from leave to confirm this covered everything he required, so this action will remain open for now.

**Open.**

### **42/24 Transparency, Contracts & Tenders (plan for Statutory Compliance)**

A meeting has been booked for CM and DH on 04/11/2024.

**Remain Open – due date amended to November 2024.**

## **2.4. Forward Plan**

- 2.4.1. SH advised that there had been some challenges setting the November 2025 meeting date in order for the Force to have sufficient time to get the papers to the PFCC. Originally it was scheduled for 24 November, the suggestion was for the meeting to be moved to 25 November with an acknowledgement that the Force would submit papers for that meeting on Monday 17 November. SH explained that this was a day after the Terms of Reference required, but that this would be workable if the Board agreed. The deadline for paper circulation would then be Wednesday 19 November, with the aim to circulate papers on 18 November 2025. This was agreed as a sensible way forward.

### **Action 44/24**

**November PRSB meeting date to be amended to 25 November 2025, with papers to be submitted to PFCC by Monday 17 November 2025 and the deadline for paper circulation to be Wednesday 19 November 2025.**

- 2.4.2. SH explained that PBI wished to add Freedom of Information requests to the Forward Plan, it was agreed that this would be added to the November 2024 PRSB meeting.

### **Action 45/24**

**Freedom of Information Requests to be added the Forward Plan for the November 2024 meeting.**

## **3. Finance**

### **3.1. Monthly Finance Report**

- 3.1.1. DM presented the 2024/25 finance report month four position for the Force. The revenue forecast overspend was at £2.125m against the revenue budget of £385.5m. DM explained that the main point to highlight was that this did not include the pay award which was agreed in early August for Officers, which would be reflected in the month five report, with early estimates suggesting that this would lead to a £700k shortfall between what the Government would provide to the Force compared to what the Force had budgeted for. Additional funding of £0.480m in relation to an overachievement of 2024/25 Police Officer Uplift was included

in the revenue forecast. Police Office strength forecast at year end was 3,753 but was expected to reach 3,820 by March 2025. The Capital financial monitoring position for month four was a forecast spend of £18.762m, which was a £2.432m underspend against the latest revised budget of £21.194m. DM explained that the net appropriations from earmarked reserves for month four were £4.135m. There was not expected to be a need for external borrowing to support capital expenditure, but further short-term external borrowing might be required.

3.1.2. JP wished to clarify how the Force planned to manage the overspend. DM explained that overtime was one of the main areas of overspend, this was discussed at COG the previous week as the budget holders did not seem to be looking at what they had spent and extrapolating that out for the remaining months of the year and needed to bring the budget back in line. AP added that this was very challenging at the moment, with the events of the last few weeks a significant amount had been spent on community engagement and reassurance. The Force was currently understaffed in contact management, with the aim to have this fully resourced by Christmas, which would then reduce their overtime spend. The Force continued to look at vacancy factors through their efficiency and savings work, but it was acknowledged that it would be challenging to balance the books. AP outlined the other significant structural pressure the Force had was the continued investment in all the new Officers that the Force had successfully recruited, and the increase in costs as they moved up the salary bands. JP acknowledged the issues raised, adding that the Force did not get a fair share of the formula funding, but that RH continued to lobby regarding this. JG confirmed that this was a joint effort with the Force trying to balance the books, the PFCC lobbying and JP continuing her conversations with PACCTS. DM added that Dawn Walters was looking at the cost of the pay award versus what the Force expect to get back in grants and the difference between these in order to pinpoint the shortfall as a result of the funding formula.

FH left the meeting at 10:28

3.1.3. JP queried in reference to the capital programme whether this might be the time to manage slippage to try and reduce some of the costs going forwards. DM explained that the main issue was around budget setting for next year with three potentially large capital programmes within the 2025/26 budget and the impact on the revenue budgets for years to come, and how to manage these against the everyday work going on.

3.1.4. JW raised his concern about the cash flow, because there had been an adverse variance in month four of £6.8m and in month three there had been an adverse variance of £8.5m. DM outlined that there had been a large impact as the Home Office had not provided £5m in July when it had been expected. JP suggested that it might be worth flagging to the Home Office the financial impact that this had upon the Force. JG suggested that this needed highlighting to RH to ensure he was aware of where this had occurred.

#### **Action 46/24**

**RH to be made aware of the financial impact of Home Office funding not being provided when it was expected.**

3.1.5. JW asked about the PUP target, with the year-end headcount forecast being 3820, which was 10 above the minimum. DM confirmed that 3810 was the baseline, but the Force had agreed to recruit 10 extra to take it to 3820. JW was concerned about how tight this was. DM explained that the Force wanted to go over so that they were not in jeopardy of losing

out on money on the critical dates on 30 September 2024 and 31 March 2025. DM suggested that once the Force knew the September figure, they could then focus more on the December and March intakes. JP queried that although the target was 3810, the Force did need to get to 3820 or they would lose that extra funding money. DM confirmed that and explained that this was being closely monitored.

## **4. Performance Reports**

### **4.1. Monthly Performance Report**

4.1.1. NM presented the monthly performance report advising there were two grading changes proposed Priority two Reducing Drug Driven Violence changed from Good to Adequate in July due to an increase in knife enabled crime. Although there had been fewer OCG disruptions, they remained at a high level. Priority 12 Increasing Collaboration changed from Adequate in June to Good in July because all measures had now shown sustained improvements. The priorities therefore were showing as four at good, seven at adequate and one at requires improvement. Key headlines showed that confidence was at 76.7% up to June 2024, which was a significant increase of 4.4% on the previous 12 months. There was a decrease in All Crime and Rural Crime driven by changes to Home Office Counting Rules, as well as a reduction in unique victims and decrease in incidents reported to the Force. Business Crime increased by 8.5% on the previous 12 months, due to an increase in shoplifting offences, however, the number and proportion of business crimes that were solved had increased at a greater rate than overall crime had increased (14.9% increase). All theft offences rose by 1.4% primarily driven by increases in shoplifting and theft of motor vehicles, although a significant reduction in theft from motor vehicle had occurred. There was a 14% decrease in the number of offences with a repeat victim. There were 2,506 fewer Stalking and harassment crimes recorded against females in the 12 months to July 2024. Violence against the Person (VAP) offences committed against females decreased by 10%, and an 11.4% decrease in the number of sexual offences committed against females. There was a statistically exceptional increase in Business Robbery offences for the month of July 2024 of 41.5%, NM explained that volumes per month were low, so it did not take a huge increase to create a significant rise, but that the Force were closely watching this.

4.1.2. JG clarified that for Reducing Drug Driven Violence the grading had changed from Good to Adequate. AP explained that there had been a small increase in the knife enabled offences for the first time in a long time, which had caused the grading change. AP added that there had been less activity from the Serious Violence Units, the teams dealing with gangs and county lines, some of which was driven by reductions in overtime and central support as the Force had tried to focus them on to the gangs and areas that were causing the highest harm, but the slight increase in knife crime had been noted.

DW left the meeting at 10:50

4.1.3. SH highlighted that priority five Improving Support for Victims of Crime was the only one still graded as Requires Improvement. JG acknowledged this but suggested that with the levels of repeat victims decreasing, there were some improvements occurring in this area. AP outlined that the disparity between general confidence and victim confidence grew not because victim confidence was falling, but because the Force were doing well in other spaces; in term of repeat victim referrals, repeat victimisation was down, the proportion of referrals were going up, even though the number of referrals were going down. It was felt by the Force that this was a contact management and Officer follow up issue, it was hoped that through the contact management plan, the investigation improvement plan and improvement programme this would improve. NM added that through the refreshed public perception

survey the Force would better get to the detail of understanding where confidence was lacking so that those areas could be targeted.

- 4.1.4. JG noted that under priority six Protecting Rural and Isolated Areas there had been an improvement, and whether the Force was clear about what had changed and whether this improvement could be sustained? AP explained that the honest answer was that there was no change in what the Force were doing.
- 4.1.5. JG recognised that Dog Theft, priority seven was where it was expected to be, and highlighted the good job that had been done in this area ensuring it would be less of a priority for the PFCC going forward.
- 4.1.6. AP highlighted that with regard to priority eight Reducing Business Crime, Fraud and Cyber Crime there had been a continued increase in shoplifting, but there had been an even bigger increase in the solved rate. AP noted that the Force continued to monitor this area closely and had controlling strategies and orders around repeat perpetrators. JG agreed that she had seen positive reports on social media regarding perpetrators going through the courts which was really positive. JG highlighted her concern that although from a policing perspective the Force were doing everything they could, but that partners needed to do more in this area.
- 4.1.7. JG was disappointed to note that under priority 10 Engaging Volunteers and Community Support, the Force continued to lose Cadets. AP highlighted that the Force had plans to correct this, with plans to reopen a couple of Cadet Units imminently, with the aim to bring 66 new Cadets in September, and a further 40 in December, which would substantially increase levels from where they currently were.
- 4.1.8. SH raised a question around priority 11 Supporting our Officers and Staff, explaining that there was a reference in the report that said the decrease in staff vacancies was due to a reduction in the number of posts, not because the vacancies were being filled, and SH asked where the reductions were currently? AP suggested that the headcount had been reduced, which was why the vacancies percentage had fallen, but was happy to provide further detail offline regarding that.

#### **Action 47/24**

**AP to provide SH with details of headcount reductions and vacancies levels.**

NM left the meeting at 11:00

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

- 5.1. AP explained that the use of Force had been at relatively stable levels for the past three years. There had been a decrease of 0.3% of stops on the previous quarter and a 15.2% decrease on the equivalent quarter last year. This was because the Force had tried to target the proactivity into hotspots and be more targeted around other crime prevention activities. For Q1 2024/25, 31.3% of Essex outcomes were positive. This was similar to the previous quarter and was higher than the Most Similar Group of Forces positive outcome rate of 30.7%.

SHoo and AM attended the meeting at 11:02

- 5.2. SH raised a question regarding the HMICFRS inspection where they had reviewed 10 pieces of body worn video (BWV) footage, which seemed like a very low sample size, and it was noted that HMICFRS were returning to sample 200 stops later in the year, SH wondered what the timeline for this was? CH confirmed that this would be a remote inspection, the sample had gone to HMICFRS, and the Force were likely to get the results of the review towards the end of October. CH wished

to clarify the actual clips that HMICFRS reviewed would inform the approach they would take to a risk-based inspection, particularly around the focus groups with Officers and staff when they come into the Force at the end of December. SH also asked whether anything was identified in the 10 that were seen. AP explained that for four of the pieces of footage the grounds were not adequately made out, by which they meant they were not properly documented. AP added that under ACC Nolan and Op Grip all supervisors were doing a dip sample of stop and search, the issue of clarity of the grounds being given was not something that had been highlighted within the Force's own work.

5.3. JG asked whether there was a reason behind the use of taser as a first tactic, which was higher than in the previous quarter? AP said they had picked up on this and should this trend continue to increase they would look into this further.

AM left the meeting at 11:13 due to technological issues.

## **6. Public Engagement Strategy**

6.1. Due to AM suffering from technology issues AP outlined the Public Engagement Strategy which received COG approval in June 2024 following both internal and external consultation. The aim of the Strategy was to formalise and standardise the process of engagement throughout all commands within Essex Police. This would provide consistency to both the public and partners. With all Officers and staff understanding the strategic direction, public and victim confidence would improve. The Public Engagement Strategy launch had only just taken place and would be subject to quarterly governance.

AM re-joined the meeting and APri joined the meeting at 11:28

FH re-joined the meeting at 11:35

6.2. JG raised the importance of the Strategy, and explained that if the Force got public engagement right the rest would follow. JG then highlighted the links with partner organisations through the strategy and asked how the Force build those with the Local Authority and elected members, and how that was reflected in the strategy? AM explained that this would occur through the CSPs, the District Commanders and then underneath that is the tactical delivery plan. JG suggested that if Local Authorities could not see themselves in it as a partner there could potentially be challenges for delivery. AM confirmed that the Force would look into that.

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

7.1. SHoo outlined the report explaining that the 999 call handling performance remained consistent despite an increase in call volume. The data detailed an increase in longest wait time, however, this was attributed to a technical issue. Whilst the reporting period showed an increase in average wait time and abandonment rate for 101 calls, this was expected due to removal of the triage process and implementation of the Contact Management Target Operating Model (TOM)M. With the TOM it was felt that there were some improvements that needed to be made, but the overall structure was right, and that once recruitment was completed this would make a significant difference. Work continued to improve call handling performance and reduce abandonment rates for 101.

7.2. JG recognised the challenges of the TOM, of setting up a new way of working, alongside the recruitment issues. SH sought reassurance around the longest wait times, even taking out those

affected by the ICS outage at the end of June, there were still longest wait times over 13 minutes from March to May. SHoo confirmed that those figures were not an average but were probably outliers. Academic work had been completed that revealed that within Essex people would wait just over five minutes. Most of the time the longest wait time were linked to the demand profile, it was hoped the queue buster would come in and help with this as the caller could request a call back rather than waiting in the queue, the system would hold their place and then they would get a call back, the system was currently being trialled to ensure it worked, with the aim to roll this out by the end of September. SH thanked SHoo for this information, and the reassurance that the public would not lose their place in the queue if they opted for a call back.

7.3. JG asked with the online reports, how long it would take for this to be reviewed on average. SHoo explained that as soon as the submit button was hit, it would come straight through as a contact record on Athena. A supervisor would review these as they came in with three options, either to generate into a crime report, generate into an intel report or no further action. As soon as they click on generate into a crime report, it would automatically be updated onto Athena and a crime reference number populated. One of the current issues they had was that the other option was to pend it if they needed more information, and that was being used too often, and training was being implemented to minimise this. SHoo explained that in July they had over 4000 reports online, with nearly 30% of crime now coming in via online crime recording, with the potential to move up to 50%, which was also more value for money as the Force were more efficient and productive online. AP highlighted that it was in the Force's interest to drive more business online by providing a great service that way, and asked how the public would know which of the three outcomes had occurred? SHoo confirmed that an email would be provided to explain what had happened, and if further information was requested that would be via email if this was suitable, or via live chat rather than phoning someone back, the aim being if someone contacted the Force digitally, that it would continue to be a digital response.

7.4. JG wondered how live chat continued to be received. SHoo explained that there had been an 115% increase in July 2024 compared to July 2023. 20% of those would not have contacted the Force in another way, so more contact options or channels did equal more contact, and for the contact handlers they could handle five to six chats each compared to one telephone call at a time, further adding to the efficiencies.

## **8. Homicide Scrutiny**

8.1. APri provided an update on homicide prevention, noting a continued reduction in the number of homicides recorded in the previous five years. There had been a recent upturn in the most recent quarter, but there were two reasons for that; firstly there were drugs deaths that had erroneously been recorded as homicides before any cause could be determined and subsequently were not homicides, and secondly there were two additional homicides recorded, where causal links had subsequently been determined and were therefore recorded as homicides. APri highlighted that the primary influencing factors for domestic abuse (DA) homicides were changing from the traditional factors, with six that were familial, which were more difficult to predict and prevent. The Force's Rapid Debrief Process was now well established and a total of 26 debriefs had now been completed. The Force continued to tackle the threat posed by County Lines and associated exploitation through the work delivered by the Serious Violence Unit, although the arrest figures for 2024 were not to the level of 2022/23 due to the continued reduction in funding from the National County Lines Coordination Centre, from over £400k in 2022 to £60k in 2024, subsequently the SVU continued to explore other financial support.

8.2. JG noted within the report that the pattern of DA homicide was changing and whether more could be done as a partnership with SETDAB. APri suggested that what was coming out of the Force's reviews was that these cases were not predictable at all. APri suggested that looking at the long-term picture partnerships such as MARAC were successful, because the volumes of partner



homicides were not occurring anymore. The pilot in Southend was discussed, and it was noted that there had been an incident, but the main areas of Southend had been well controlled with lots of policing presence.

8.3. FH provided an update on the ILAS pilot discussed in the report explaining that there might be some potential funding to support that, which might enable the Force to continue this locally. FH added that the Force had also been involved in some research with Cambridge and local hospitals to look at near-miss medical episodes, and that this may turn into more of a national piece. Cambridge was still working through the challenges around information sharing, but the Force were still engaged in that piece of work and awaited the opportunity to become actively involved to spot those near misses and potential future vulnerable victims. JG thanked FH for this update and advised that herself and RH continued to lobby national government and local MPs regarding the need for them to support funding around DA, as the drop in funding from £400k to £60k was substantial. APri explained the concern that with centralised funding reducing in such a significant way, it could reduce opportunities for the Force to continue its level of grip, overview and control of these issues.

## **9. Approval for publishing of documents**

9.1. JG advised only the appendix for item 8 was official sensitive. AP added that taking on JG's feedback on the public engagement strategy the Force would look at making a more explicit reference to the partners, so this would probably change. All other papers were proposed for publishing. This was agreed.

## **10. Any Other Business**

10.1. There being no further business the meeting closed at 12:07 hours.

### **Future meeting dates**

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