

Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

Friday 25 July 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Haydon, in the Chair.

Councillor Chopak, Vice Chair.

Councillors Ashton, Billings (Substituting for Cllr Tyreman) Czapiewski, Ewings, German, Hackett, Hodgetts, Loudoun, Palethorpe, Penberthy, Thomas, Towill (Substituting for Cllr Parsonage) and Wright.

Barry Jones (Independent Member for Devon) and Caroline Jones (Independent Member for Cornwall).

Apologies for absence: Councillors Parsonage, Tyreman, Rodger.

Also in attendance: Alison Hernandez (Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner), Frances Hughes (Chief Executive Officer for the OPCC), Nicola Allen (Treasurer) and Jake Metcalfe (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.42 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

18. Appointment of the Chair for Municipal Year 2025 - 2026

Councillor Penberthy proposed Councillor Haydon as Chair which was seconded by Councillor Hackett.

Councillor Hodgetts proposed Councillor Chopak as Chair which was seconded by Councillor Ashton.

The Panel agreed to appoint Councillor Haydon as Chair for the 2025/26 municipal year.

19. Appointment of the Vice-Chair for Municipal Year 2025 - 2026

Councillor Towill proposed Councillor Chopak as Vice-chair which was seconded by Councillor German.

The Panel agreed to appoint Councillor Chopak as Vice-chair for the 2025/26 municipal year.

20. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting that took place on 31 January 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

21. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor German: Prisoners building homes programme. Councillor German declared that he was on the Board of local partnership which supports that programme.

Caroline Jones (Independent Member for Cornwall) declared that she was a Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children in Care for Cornwall.

22. **Public Questions**

Question from Mr Mike Joyce: Can the Panel request that the OPCC and the Force are clear on the use of powers in relation to illegal encampments, as per statutory guidance for Police on Unauthorised Encampments a summary of available powers.

Such harms, disruption or distress could include, but are not limited to: a) local communities being prevented from accessing or using facilities, such as school sports fields, parks and car parks.

Answer: Thank you Mr Joyce for your question. The Panel has sought assurances from the Commissioner who has advised that the force and the OPCC are clear on the use of powers and there are many examples where this was working effectively.

It is important that where there is an unauthorised encampment which conflicts with settled communities then this must be reported through the correct channels. The guidance is clear that this is a local authority lead with support from the Police. The Panel will consider adding this to the work programme to seek future reassurances and scrutiny if the Panel feels necessary.

23. **Police and Crime Commissioners Update**

Alison Hernandez (Police and Crime Commissioner) presented the report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- a) National government reinstated hotspot policing for 2025/26 and requested action plans for what the Police were doing over the summer period in the regions, towns and cities;
- b) The funding to the night buses was reducing the levels of public order offences and violence whilst people were waiting for taxis or struggling to get home late at night. The most popular had been the Torquay to Brixham bus. Feedback from young people was that they were enjoying the experiences of being able to go home safely, particularly young women;
- c) Drugs and alcohol was a priority in the Police and Crime Plan and there had been a real push and collaboration in the southwest region to push drugs out. Intelligence suggested that county lines were changing their business model because of the successes in disrupting;

- d) In the Police and Crime plan there had been some examples of what the Police and local authorities had been doing together with the Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) in relation to shoplifting. Plymouth had been pioneering the element of what was the minimum paperwork required to get a shoplifting offence to charging and into Court;
- e) The police had delivered the UK pack system which aimed to provide a free access to a crime reporting system for businesses. It enabled the visibility of prolific offenders to those businesses and enabled them to report additional anti-social behaviour or issues they experienced with those individuals. This would transform the way in which towns and cities were tackling shoplifting;
- f) The region were exemplars in the delivery of the community safety accreditation scheme (CSAS), which were the powers the Chief Constable delegated to people who were not police officers. The Commissioner would aim to produce a video over the summer period and to interview a number of people delivering that scheme in the regions communities.

In responses to questions raised it was reported that:

- g) There were no reported ASB incidents on the night buses;
- h) The Commissioner reiterated that she was not pleased in having a number of leaders of the police organisation in particular the number of temporary leaders as they could not act as a full chief constable unless they were the substantive and were not able to set the strategy and direction as they should;
- i) When the HMICFRS identified poor performance of the Police in 2022, the force had performed well which had come about under the leadership of Chief Constable James Vaughan in driving performance with pace and attention. The Commissioner advised the Panel that she did not want to rush into a recruitment process for a new chief constable whilst there was strong performance focus and leadership from the current interim chief constable;
- j) The Commissioner's next update report would report on good practice across the region;
- k) By Mr Will Kerr retiring it did not infer guilt in anything, although he was still under investigation for gross misconduct by the Independent Officer of Police Conduct (IOPC) which could go on for a number of years. The Commissioner advised the Panel that she was disgusted by the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the IOPC and had written to the policing minister requesting that the Home Secretary should scrutinise the body. The Commissioner advised that she had made a rational and pragmatic decision to agree with Mr Kerr, that retirement was the best option and he did have the interests of the people of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly at heart because he recognised how difficult it had been for the Commissioner to support the organisation due to the number of interims. Mr Kerr's retirement allowed the Commissioner to get to a point of having a stable substantive chief constable for the organisation which

was to the benefit of everyone;

- l) Due to the IOPC investigation Mr Kerr would've been entitled to full pay for the duration of that investigation which could've taken years to find a conclusion;
- m) The Commissioner advised the Panel that she and Mr Kerr mutually agreed an arrangement for him to leave in a pragmatic and rational way. The information would be published in the statement of accounts next year;
- n) There was a large crime scene that had been identified In Cornwall which required a large effort to scene guard the area. Mutual aid allowed the force to bring in expertise in specific types of investigations that Devon and Cornwall Police did not have. The mutual aid was largely investigative. The Commissioner commented that there were lots of forensic officers and the Police were trying to establish the circumstances. The Commissioner thanked frontline officers who were putting in 12 hour shifts;
- o) Deputy Chief Constable Colwell was found guilty of misconduct and not gross misconduct and had returned back to the force and was getting on with the job at hand;
- p) The Commissioner advised the panel that she was allowed to be political in a personal capacity and did not use any resources of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to undertake any political matters;
- q) The Councillor Advocate Scheme presented good opportunities to share good practice across the region but there needed to be more engagement from Cornwall Councillors;
- r) Police enquiry offices were having the intended effects, providing good face to face contact with communities to report crime;
- s) The force had not seen a drop off on 101 calls and there was no increase in the abandonment rate;
- t) Cambourne's Enquiry Office had been refurbished and was open to the public;
- u) The planned enquiry offices for Exeter City centre and Exmouth would not go ahead. Exmouth's proposed new police station would not happen due to the substantial increase in costs to build one. The Exeter enquiry office was proposed to be within an existing council office, but due to a policy of not allowing weapons to be brought in, that office could not come to fruition;
- v) There had been an inspection into serious and organised crime in the southwest and all regions did not have good results. The regional organised crime group had a satisfactory outcome but the five forces that supported the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit (SWROCU) and the staff deployed in the SWROCU required improvement. The Commissioner was the national lead for serious and organised crime for Police and Crime

Commissioners and co-chaired this with David Allen (Police and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria) and was looking at areas where they had a good grip on serious and organised crime and would look at the north of the country;

- w) Councillors across the region were welcomed to take part in the Councillor Advocate Scheme and the OPCC apologised to those councillors that were affected by a miscommunication which resulted in them being advised they couldn't be part of the Panel and the Councillor Advocate Scheme.

Action: Commissioner to attend Launceston with Cllr Chopak in relation to a Policy enquiry office.

Action: The Commissioner would share the draft plan around the delivery of Safer Streets to the Panel.

Action: The Commissioner would link in with ward councillors when she was putting in initiatives for their particular wards

Action: The Commissioner would ensure Councillor Penberthy and ward councillors for St Peter and the Waterfront in Plymouth was invited to regular meetings in relation to initiative happening in that ward.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

24. **Draft Annual Report 2024/25**

Alison Hernandez (Police and Crime Commissioner) introduced and in response to questions it was reported that:

- a) The Commissioner would share any open letters with councillors in the future;
- b) The Commissioner would amend the annual report to include the national government priority of the neighbourhood policing guarantee;
- c) The night bus initiative wouldn't feature in the 2024/25 annual report as it was largely funded in that financial year and would therefore be reported in the 2025/26 annual report;
- d) A plan was being developed for custody suites and the OPCC were doing some scrutiny around the safety of detainees and their rights and welfare being met. The OPCC was also reviewing what the independent custody visitors were saying about the suites, also how often appropriate adults were available. There was a longer term plan that was looking at the costs and facilities;
- e) The Commissioner advised that there were no savings in a custody suite as they were expensive to run and expensive both physically and with resources of staff. The Commissioner advised that if the Panel agreed, custody suites

could be brought back to the Panel following her scrutiny activity;

- f) Anti-social behaviour (ASB) was difficult as some areas of ASB were police led whilst others were the responsibility of the local authority and despite working hard to bring together those two partners, ASB was still on the streets and not working well enough;
- g) The Police did not received a capital budget from national government for firing ranges. The current firing ranges were at the end of their life stage and the Police were exploring regionally and nationally what the plan in the future would be. The Commissioner advised the panel that she wanted to avoid officers travelling large distances to train at alternative fire range facilities;
- h) The Commissioners Accountability Board published an assurance statement which reviewed the operational activity in relation to performance and whether the Commissioner was assured or not of the plan for improvement;
- i) The safe bus in Torbay would close as Health partners would be ceasing their activity in the space. Plymouth's safe bus would be the only one to continue in the region;
- j) The Commissioner advised that in relation to a police enquiry office in Exeter the Police were unable to guarantee that members of the public wouldn't bring in weapons and was the reason why the enquiry office would not open;
- k) The Commissioner reiterated that the police and their estates team worked closely with the military to find sites in the region where firearm police officers could train, but there were issues around availability of those sites as they were heavily use for their own purposes throughout the year. The Panel were advised that there was no capacity at indoor firing ranges;
- l) Since the introduction of the AI camera which was used to detect people using mobile phones at the wheel and/or not wearing their seatbelts, there has been an increase in the number of people using their seatbelts over a three year period. The Commissioner advised the Panel that she was hoping to go to Westminster with the camera to make it really visible with politicians;
- m) The Commissioner advised the Panel that the complaints process was laid out by government and the Commissioners role was to be the appeals body for the complaints against the Police. The OPCC could only investigate the process of the complaint. The Commissioner had made available £500,000 into the complaints department, they've recruited a new heads of complaints and a team within the professional standards department that only dealt with complaints from the public and not police misconduct;
- n) There had been a backlog in dealing with the complaints and the commissioner apologies to any resident that had not heard back from in any sort of timely manner. The Commissioner expressed dissatisfaction at the

backlog being up to a year which is why the extra resources had been provided and why she had given direction to the Chief Constable to attempt to resolve. The Commissioner advised that as a result of those actions the backlog had almost ceased to exist.

Actions:

1. The Commissioner would share any open letters written with councillors of the Panel.
2. The Commissioner would have discussions with Exeter City Council around the Safe Bus and whether this initiative could happen there.
3. The Commissioner to correct the statement within the annual report in which it states the safe bus runs every Saturday as this was factually incorrect and the bus ran on differing days depending on events.
4. The Commissioner would ensure there was a narrative around the staffing figures dropping in 2025 from 2024 figures.
5. The Commissioner would copy in Cllr Loudoun when discussing buildings in Exmouth for Police Enquiry offices.
6. The Draft Annual Plan should have an accessible version for members of the public.
7. The work of the Vision Zero Partnership needed to be more granular so members of the public understood the good work going on in relation to road safety.
8. The Commissioner to create a young people's version of the annual report which could sent into schools for PSHE work.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

25. **Cost and Functions of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner**

Alison Hernandez (Police and Crime Commissioner) introduced and in response to questions it was reported that:

- a) PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) were reviewing all back office functions and budgets related to that area and would be able to brief members of the Panel before the precept meeting in February 2026;
- b) The Commissioner advised the Panel that she would never use the resources of the office for political reasons and there was a monitoring officer employed which oversaw those actions;
- c) It was reported that the Chief Constable wanted all neighbourhood policing teams to look like the diverse communities team and they needed to take

more responsibility at the local policing level to understand their communities;

- d) The Commissioner reiterated her desire to get her budget for the OPCC back to 0.65% and the reason for the increase over the 0.65% was due to changes in the misconduct process.

Action: The Commissioner would have discussions with the relevant councils when sending out information in relation to Council Tax.

Action: The Commissioner was requested to inform the Panel how her office would get back to its expenditure target of 0.65% as part of setting the next budget.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

26. **Performance Papers**

Alison Hernandez (Police and Crime Commissioner) introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- a) There were a number of red KPI's but these were due to them being identified as part of the Police and Crime Plan to ensure there was more focus to ensure improvement;
- b) The Office of National Statistics (ONS) had published a new dataset and would feature in the next performance report;
- c) 90% of 101 calls were answered within 10 minutes which was a fantastic achievement for the force that had sought to put things right.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- d) The Police had got better at recording crime and the Commissioner requested the Panel to have a presentation on what crime data integrity looked like, looking at the types of processes that the force went through for recording crime;
- e) The Commissioner reiterated the importance of recording crime correctly to ensure that victims in the region got the justice they deserved;
- f) In relation to hate crime victims often did not identify that the crime they were reporting was in fact a hate crime until Police investigations took place and often there was a lag from the initial report to the hate crime identification;
- g) The Commissioner advised the Panel that she would look to bring a profile for drugs in the region to a meeting on the panel within the municipal year that also looked to provide an update on county lines;
- h) The Commissioner advised that she had organised a disruption workshop in

relation to violence against women and girls and welcomed radical ideas and solutions to tackling male violence against women and girls in order to break the cycle of the figures rising consistently.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

27. **Non-Criminal Complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner**

Frances Hughes (Chief Executive, Office of the P and Crime Commissioner) presented the report to the Panel and advised:

- a) There had been two complaints since the beginning of January 2025 and both were resolved in consultation with the Chair of the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- b) The number of complaints vary from Panel to Panel but two was deemed to be a normal amount;
- c) The Panel were advised of the arrangements of the complaints process for those complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner;
- d) Both complaints related to comments that the commissioner made in the media and those complaints were dealt with through the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel's direction.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

28. **Action Log**

The Panel agreed to note the action log.

29. **Work Programme**

The Panel agreed to add the following items to the work programme:

- Estates Strategy and Custody Suite Developments
- Complaints
- Deep dive into reporting crime
- Commissioners Scrutiny
- Neighbourhood Community Policing
- Equalities Legislation
- Councillor Advocate Scheme good practice