

# **Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel**

**Friday 31 January 2025**

## **PRESENT:**

Councillor Haydon in the Chair  
Councillor Worth Vice Chair  
Councillors Alvey, Chopak, Croad, Czapiewski, Ewings, Hackett, Loudoun, Penberthy, Thomas, Tilbey, Toms, Tyerman, Wright and Barry Jones (Independent Member for Devon)

Apologies for absence: Councillors Goodman-Bradbury, Rodgers, Leaver and Caroline Jones (Independent Member for Cornwall).

The meeting started at 10.32 am and finished at 1.46 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.*

## 9. **Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting held 22 November 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

## 10. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 11. **Public Questions**

There were no questions from members of the public.

## 12. **Proposed Precept, Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)**

Alison Hernandez (Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Police and Crime Commissioner) introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- a) Theft had been added into the Police and Crime Plan, which included burglary and shoplifting;
- b) The Police and Crime Plan was launched in late January 2025;
- c) The budget survey noted an increased public approval rate of the value for money provided by the policing precept, as well as a rise in confidence in the services delivered by Devon and Cornwall Police and was higher than the national picture;

- d) Alcohol had been added in to the Police and Crime Plan due to being a key driver for crime;
- e) Violence was a big challenge and the Commissioner outlined that she wanted to tackle crimes such as domestic abuse, rape and Child and Sexual Abuse in her term of office;
- f) Radical ideas and partnership working with local authorities were needed to intervene in violent crime;
- g) It was highlighted that the Police has maintained record police officer numbers in Devon and Cornwall, with 3,610 in total;
- h) There were 9,128 extra patrol hours carried out in the busy summer period, which led to 127 arrests, The Commissioner outlined that she would like to continue with this through the budget proposals as the funding for hotspot policing did not continue into 2025/26;
- i) The opening of Ivybridge Police Inquiry Office and Tavistock Police Inquiry Office would take place in February 2025 with Liskeard and Exeter opening in late 2025;
- j) Improvements were made in Public contact;
- k) It was noted that in an emergency, Police would pick up the phone within 10 seconds 94% of the time, and in a non-emergency, the Police would answer 83% within 10 minutes;
- l) Thanks were expressed to the police for their swift prosecution of offenders and for bringing an end to the disorder associated with the Plymouth riots in August 2024;
- m) Devon and Cornwall Police seized assets worth £2.8 million pounds from Andrew Tate and his brother Tristan with £1.2 million pounds of the money claimed, being earmarked for policing, in Devon and Cornwall and would be spent on Violence Against Women and Girls efforts;
- n) Resources would be reallocated against priorities to ensure value for money;
- o) Savings of £16.5 million pounds would be required in the budget, to meet a sustainable plan for the following four years;
- p) £6.5 million pounds of those savings, were included in the proposed budget for 2025/2026;
- q) The Commissioner announced that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had confirmed an allocation of £1.3 million for the award-winning prisoners building homes program and there were plans to build over 180 homes in the South West;

- r) 30,251 victims of crime were supported in 2023-2024;
- s) Honourable thanks were given to the Vision Zero Road Safety collaboration across the peninsula;
- t) A formal introduction was given for Interim Chief Constable James Vaughan who started his post in December 2024.
- u) Thanks were given to; The Vice Chair of the Council, The Representatives from His Majesty's Inspectorate for Fire and Rescue Services and Constabulary, The College of Policing and The Chief Executive of Cornwall Council in being able to achieve the recruitment of Interim Chief Constable James Vaughan;
- v) The misconduct of Mr. Kerr were referred to the investigating body for police conduct matters, which resulted in his suspension. The authorities in Northern Ireland had primacy on the matter and the commissioner was disappointed in the lack of pace to find a resolution;
- w) The Commissioner met with the Policing Minister, Dame Diana Johnson who would make enquiries into the investigation, with the authorities in Northern Ireland;
- x) As legally necessary, the matters of allegations of gross misconduct against Mr Colwell, were referred to the IOPC (Independent Office for Police Conduct) which led to his suspension;
- y) The Force's performance was not satisfactory or consistent. While improvements had been made in public contact and the management of sexual and violent offenders, the force remained under the 'Engage' process with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services for crime recording and investigation standards;
- z) The second homes council tax looked to address the unique challenges in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and Devon and Cornwall Police was in an excellent financial position when compared nationally and the force would not be cutting police officers or staff;
- aa) The Chief Constable had agreed to undertake a rank review with the aim of returning as many police constables to the frontline as possible with an estimated 60 Police Constables roles being created through efficiencies and savings £2 million pounds;
- bb) Consideration for a Mayoral Authority for Devon and Cornwall was being considered;
- cc) The Government settlement was below the cost for the policing pay award, employers national insurance and inflation. Safer Streets funding would not be available in the budget, however the Commissioner would create a new fund named Street Focus;

- dd) A Neighbour Policing Grant had been created to increase PC's, PCSO's or Special's, in the neighbourhood teams;
- ee) The Neighbour Policing Grant would be doubled;
- ff) Firearms licencing fees were increasing following a government announcement. It was known that the new funding would not cover the costs of department;
- gg) Some of the poorest in the communities across the region would be able to claim up to 100% support for the council tax liability;
- hh) A proposal was made, for a total precept increase of £13.70 for 2025, which would equate to a council tax band D of £288.20 or 4.99%;
- ii) Band D households paid £27.45 a month over 10 months, if paid monthly, and this would rise to £28.82.

Nicola Allen (Treasurer of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) highlighted the following points concerning financial data on the report.

- jj) The increase of the Neighbourhood Grant would not affect the net revenue budget;
- kk) There was a 339 increase in core grant nationally, which was a £8 million increase for Devon and Cornwall;
- ll) There was a £12 million decrease in specific grants which was a £900,000 decrease for the region;
- mm) There would be £430 million of new grants specifically for the National Insurance Grant and the Neighbourhood Policing Grant;
- nn) The overall increase in funding would be 6.5%;
- oo) The National Insurance Grant of £5.7 million did not cover the totality of the National Insurance increase by around £625,000;
- pp) There was no capital grant funding grant which ceased in 2022/23;
- qq) The budget requirement for the Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly increased to £432.32 million for a net revenue budget seeing an increase of £26.4 million;
- rr) There was a capital programme of £113 million over four years;
- ss) Pay and inflation pressures consisted of £27.7 million;

- tt) The funding level for the ring-fenced maintenance grant was on-going and was dependent on maintaining officer levels of 3,610;
  - uu) The proposed budget would provide mitigation of risks by a balanced medium term financial position, not using one off money to fund on-going expenditure with no exit strategy. There were realistic assumptions which used assumptions from the Office for Budget responsibility;
  - vv) Savings and efficiency for £5.8 million were included in the budget;
  - ww) Staffing equated to 85% of the overall budget and presented a risk to the service;
  - xx) General reserves were around 4% and the strategy indicated that it would remain between 3% and 5%
  - yy) All decisions were published into the public domain to ensure transparency;
  - zz) The code of corporate governance was reviewed bi-annually;
  - aaa) Inflation had decreased since October 2022;
  - bbb) The Council tax base had increased by 4.65%;
  - ccc) The net surplus was at £2.8 million;
  - ddd) The level of second homes from Bands A to C was 45%, whereas the level of chargeable dwellings was 65%;
  - eee) In band H, there were 273 second homes in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly;
  - fff) The highest proportion of Band E equivalents, that were second homes, were the Isles of Scilly, South Hams, Cornwall and North Devon;
  - ggg) The proposed Medium and Financial Term Plan was robust and sustainable. It was reported that there was a four year balanced position.
- James Vaughan (Chief Constable, Devon and Cornwall Police) highlighted the following points:
- hhh) There were adjustments in the leadership as well as a focus in performance, to improve public confidence;
  - iii) There was a review of management concerning sex offenders;
  - jjj) Over 2024, the level of performance had been above 90% of crimes being recorded accurately;

- kkk) Improvements were to be made on processes for contacting victims of crime;
- lll) Improvements on preventing and decreasing delays in reporting crime would be undertaken;
- mmm) Expectations for robust oversight on Police staff;
- nnn) An increase in Council Tax for citizens, to deliver the Police and Crime Plan for 2025 to 2029;
- ooo) The budget was dependent on savings, and a savings plan had been introduced, as well as a new budget system;
- ppp) The rank structure would be reviewed, and a reduction in senior ranks to put more workers in the front line was the aim.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- qqq) A police station front desk was opened in Looe to support policing and issues there;
- rrr) The Commissioner was disappointed that National Insurance for policing was not fully funded;
- sss) The Commissioner had taken into account the Leader of Cornwall Council's request in relation to investment in areas with second home bonuses;
- ttt) The cost of three Chief Constables was £70,000 a month and the Commissioner had requested that the acting Chief Constable should revert back to the substantive post that he was employed to do;
- uuu) The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner salary would be two thirds of the Commissioner's salary and the job application and recruitment process was yet to be determined;
- vvv) The budget looked at the Welsh Model in relation to second homes and the OPCC made a projection and assumption for future years of a reduction in second home council tax;
- www) It was noted that the Police service in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly was top heavy which was a view shared by the Police Superintendent Association. It was a desire to reduce those numbers and to increase the number of staff on the frontline. No one would be demoted from their substantive rank but promotion processes for senior officers were paused;
- xxx) Detective work was hard and was one of the hardest roles within policing. It was noted that it was hard to recruit and then to retain those good members of staff. The Panel were provided assurances that the service was doing everything it could to increase the numbers of detectives;

- yyy) The Commissioner held a commitment to cap the cost of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to 0.65% of the budget. It was acknowledged that this had increased to 0.68% and was due to a statutory responsibility costing the Office £200,000 due to new rules for misconduct panels;
- zzz) All Police and Crime Commissioners proposed a 2% increase in the pat award collectively and Chief Constables proposed 3.6%. The Commissioner hoped the government took into account that police officers were earning more money in relation to their basic pay and went with a 2% pay increase;
- aaaa) The proposed budget provided a 2% base increase for the pay award with a contingency of 0.8%;
- bbbb) Policing in rural areas would look to target burglary, sexual violence, violence, ASB, drugs and alcohol issues;
- cccc) It was accepted that the firing ranges were not in the best state and there had been planning challenges in which members of the public did not wish to hear gunshots. It was acknowledged as being a large challenge for the force to ensure response officers were fully training and able to be deployed at their best. The travel costs for officers to learn elsewhere was not an efficient option due to the cost;
- dddd) The Ministry of Defence had reported to the OPCC that they were at capacity with their own officers and therefore were not able to offer space to the Police;
- eeee) The Police and Crime Plan explicitly mentioned what would be tackled in rural areas. In particular, wildlife crime, rural ASB and drug dealers would be deterred and reduced. Organised criminals were prevented from operating in the countryside;
- ffff) Rural crime officers had the greatest of respect from the Farmers Union and the Gamekeepers Association and the Force was working hard to address rural theft, ensuring that it was reported, investigated and prevented;
- gggg) Nationally, reports of crime in rural areas was largely underreported, and the Force knew it needed to encourage people to do so;
- hhhh) It was understood that in rural areas, there was a large need for residents to stay anonymous for fear of retribution and was why the Force promoted Crime Stoppers;
- iiii) The Estate's Strategy would be added to the work programme;
- jjjj) The night and safe buses were funded by the OPCC and were important for the night-time economy. It reduced anti-social behaviour, violence and sexual offences. The Commissioner wanted women and girls to feel safe within city centres and within the night time economies;
- kkkk) The Commissioner highlighted that there would be challenges around

devolution as well as challenges around cost. The Commissioner advised the Panel that she wanted to be part of the conversations around devolution due to the breadth of knowledge for the region. It was also highlighted that the conversation seemed to neglect the Isles of Scilly.

The Panel agreed to accept the council tax precept proposal without any recommendation and not exercise a veto.

### 13. **Police and Crime Plan Scorecard**

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- a) Theft was added into the scorecard as a new priority to the Police and Crime action plan, as it required a radical step change in the way that the Police responded to it. Road safety had been taken out and theft has been added as the force was aware that across the region, communities and shopkeepers were frustrated. The force needed to make sure that small business were thriving;
- b) Plymouth had faced some notable challenges over the past few years and the Plymouth had become great at responding in a crisis, but we needed to stop them happening in the first place;
- c) Local authorities had a duty to tackle serious violence and the Commissioner had a meeting which was with the first Serious Violence Peninsula Group. The meeting would look to understand how the duty was being delivered;
- d) Hate crime data would be available at Community Safety Partnership level and it was requested that if that wasn't working, to then report this to the Commissioner;
- e) The Commissioner requested victims of hate crime to report this to the Police and they would be treated seriously and supported well;
- f) The recording of Antisocial Behaviour within the Policing statistics, dropped dramatically during COVID as no one was outside. It then increased due to neighbour disputes and never went back up. The Commissioner requested that these incidences are reported to the Police;
- g) The Commissioner advised that the government needed to consider an alternative punishment to shoplifters other than prison. Shoplifting was often a repeat crime, which was seen as a minor offence and incurred small punishments and therefore did not deter;
- h) Data of ASB in Devon could be split out into the differing local authority areas which would allow councillors to see the areas that required an improved response;
- i) The Commissioner put at risk £120,000-£130,000 of Devon and Cornwall taxpayers money, towards making a house in Torquay through a prison to



prove it could work. Since then houses had been built in Bristol, there was a site in Plymouth in which plans were being developed and 180 planned homes for delivery across the southwest. National Government had provided £1.3 million to support in taking this project further.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

14. **Police and Crime Commissioners Update**

The Panel agreed to write a letter to HMICFRS and the Home Secretary that the delay in coming to a conclusion around the issues of suspension for Chief Constables from the Devon Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Police force was costing the region in lost leadership time as well as lost financial costs incurred.

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

Frances Hughes (Chief Executive) advised the Panel that there were no new complaints about the Commissioner.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

16. **Tracking Decision Log**

The Panel agreed to note its tracking decision log.

17. **Work Programme**

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

- Custody suite developments
- Estates Strategy
- Hate Crime (including the Commissioners Hate Crime Deep dive)
- Rural and urban anti-social behaviour

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