



**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**
for Leicester,
Leicestershire & Rutland

Your Communities - Your Commissioner

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE BOARD

18th September 2024

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Please note that Operational Summary has been redacted as not suitable for public domain.

1. Overview, attendance & purpose

Overview

Chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Corporate Governance Board is attended by both the OPCC and the Chief Officer Team who meet roughly every 8 weeks to discuss and highlight the performance of Leicestershire Police force, allowing the PCC to challenge, scrutinise and discuss potential support from the OPCC. Below is a report detailing the discussions of the meeting held on the 18th September 2024.

Attendance

Office of Police and Crime Commissioner

Mr Rupert Matthews (Police and Crime Commissioner)
Mrs Rani Mahal (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner)
Claire Trewartha (CEO)
Mrs Kira Knott (Chief Finance Officer)
Mrs Lizzie Starr (Director of Governance and Performance)
Mrs Clare Hornbuckle (Evaluation and Scrutiny Officer, minute taker)

Office of Chief Constable

Mr Rob Nixon (Chief Constable)
Mr David Sandall (Deputy Chief Constable)
Mr Adam Streets (Assistant Chief Constable)
Mrs Michaela Kerr (Assistant Chief Constable)
Mr Chris Kealey (Head of Communications and Engagement)
Mr Alistair Kelly (ACO HR)
Mr Paul Dawkins (ACO FR)

Purpose

The purpose of the Corporate Governance Board is to allow the PCC to carry out their statutory duty of holding the Chief Constable to account on behalf of the public. The board consists of both reports, presentations and verbal discussions guided by the Chair on key areas such as performance, corporate risk, recruitment, HMICFRS, among other measures. This report is to highlight the main points covered in the latest CBG, in the following format:

- i. Overview of issue (with the exception of repeat financial items)
- ii. Force update/overview
- iii. Police and Crime Commissioner response (where appropriate)

2. Urgent Business

No urgent business.

3. Operational Summary

Overview: The Chief Officer Team bring an operational summary paper to each Corporate Governance Board, detailing key operational activity from the previous two months. The summary contains operationally sensitive information and details are therefore redacted from public facing reports. The comments from the PCC have been included within this report.

Force update: The Force provided a verbal update on the summary to the board. The Op Summary included the fact that on the recent HMICFRS inspection on impartiality in policing published on the 10th September 2024, Leicestershire Police received six separate positive mentions. The remainder of the Op Summary contains operationally sensitive information and therefore has not been included within this report.

PCC response: The PCC congratulated the Force on getting six positive mentions in the recent HMICFRS report on Activism and Impartiality in Policing. DCC Sandall responded that Leicestershire were one of the top performing forces nationally in this inspection area. CC Nixon added that it was a particular achievement for Leicestershire Police in light of the challenges faced locally such as significantly increased demand and that this should be celebrated which was agreed by the PCC.

The Chair raised two queries in relation to Neighbourhood Link, asking what sort of quality control is there around the app and secondly, what spot checking is carried out. CC Nixon provided assurance that Chris Kealey was well linked in with Neighbourhood Link and provides training to officers on the type of content expected. Chris Kealey continued that a base level of competence is provided to officers regarding use of the app, however, has identified some inconsistencies, referring to some occasional inconsistencies in content quality. Chris Kealey concluded stating that over the last 6-8 weeks, training on how to produce quality context has been provided to NPA commanders, along with a templating format for content, with the intention that trained individuals will disseminate information locally in their teams.

4. Emerging Issues

4a) Trust and Confidence Local Data – Revisit and Update on Activity Undertaken

Overview: Trust and Confidence levels have been decreasing steadily across all Forces. According to ONS Crime Perception Survey for England and Wales March 2024. Current survey data for Leicestershire Police shows that 54.1% of respondents state that Leicestershire Police do an excellent or good job.

Force update: The board received an update paper authored by Chief Inspector Adam Wardle and a verbal update from CC Nixon. CC Nixon explained to the board that Leicestershire Police have been sighted as demonstrating best practice in relation to the policing response for the East Leicester disorder. CC Nixon explained that this positive recognition deserved acknowledgement and celebration which was agreed by the board.

The update paper included a number of activity updates including:

- The Force Executive Group receive monthly updates regarding progression of Force activities in line with the Trust and Confidence Strategy.
- Local Independent advisory groups (LIAG) are embedded within the Local Policing framework. Work is ongoing to diversify the membership with support from the Force Engagement team and future participation from members of the Black Heritage Focus Group.
- Poll Surveying has been undertaken via Facebook and WhatsApp since June 2024 in support of collecting data linked to the introduction of the Policing Pledge which in-turn helps inform on our position regarding Trust and Confidence.
- Partnership work between Corporate Communications and SSD where commissioned work has been completed to undertake interviews and podcasts with young black residents of LLR to talk about their perceptions of Leicestershire Police. The feedback report is due in September 24.

The board discussed satisfaction levels among LLR.

PCC response: Lizzie Starr asked the Force to clarify how they obtain their satisfaction data, to which the Force confirmed that this is conducted over the telephone with individuals who have had contact with the police. Mrs Starr queried the satisfaction levels in the report, citing the 76% satisfaction level included. Mrs Starr noted the contrast of this figure with the figure of 31% found in the PCC's independent survey conducted in 2023.

Chris Kealey commented that some other OPCCs carry out all surveys for public accountability however noted that this was not preferential in Leicestershire, stating that the Force want to use question sets that they can lift actions from directly following the consultation. CC Nixon stated that the Force want to feel they are doing all they can to improve trust and confidence locally. The PCC queried the NPA community engagement standards procedure mentioned in paragraph 20 of the report, asking whether this was something that had only recently been introduced. Chris Kealey clarified that it had been in existence for some time but has just been renamed and embedded, as this procedure should be understood as standard practice force wide.

4b) Update on Recommendations from East Leicester Disorder Review

Overview: Following the disorder in East Leicester the Chief Constable commissioned an independent review of police action. In September 2023 the Commissioner requested and received at Corporate Governance Board an update on how the Review's recommendations were being implemented.

Force update: The Board received a copy of the report submitted in September 2023. A discussion followed on some details of this report. The Chief Constable pointed out that the Force is now engaging with the national review regarding the disorder.

PCC response: The Commissioner was of the view that receiving a copy of a year old report that had already been received by CGB did not constitute an update on the situation. He informed the Chief Constable that the item would need to return to the next meeting of the CGB and that he would be sending to the Chief Constable a more precise Brief in an effort to avoid misunderstanding of what was required.

4c) Policing Elections Update

Overview: Following the general election, the PCC requested a paper from the Force detailing the Force response, the election related demand and updates against any ongoing election-related investigations.

Force update: The board received a paper authored by Chief Superintendent Shane O'Neill. The report provided several updates on the elections policing response, including details on the total figures of deployed staff, details of the command structure enacted in Force in response, and total number of election-related crimes including electoral malpractice in small numbers. Demand was cited at a 57% increase compared to the demand from the last general election. The paper also provided details in relation to Op Bridger and steps taken by the Force to provide security to candidates and other MPs locally. Leicestershire Police remain compliant with Home Office requirements under the Chief Officer Lead and Op Bridger lead.

PCC response: The PCC passed on positive feedback from members of parliament on how the Force policed the 2024 general election, stating that three individuals were very complimentary of the Force's handling of the day. CC Nixon responded with thanks on behalf of the Force to Paul Wenlock and Supt Richard Jackson who provided significant support for the policing of the Election.

Lizzie Starr queried the home office grants for policing elections and asked how the £46,000 received compares to the actual demand costs. Paul Dawkins clarified that this income did not cover investigations beyond the election period and was specifically for the election period and 'boots on the ground' during election day. Mrs Starr further queried the discrepancy in the number of arrests vs charges cited within the report, querying how many arrests were NFA'd (no further action). DCC Sandall confirmed to check and feed back to Mrs Starr.

5. Finance

a) Budget Monitoring and Capital Programme Update

Paul Dawkins provided a verbal summary of the paper to the board. Mr Dawkins touched on the initial context of the planned 6% vacancy rate for police staff, with the aim to achieve total cashable savings of £8.6m this year. Mr Dawkins informed the board that as of the end of July, the Force were actually overachieving savings of a further £2.3m. Mr Dawkins confirmed with the board that the Force were proceeding with the reduction of PCSOs from 200 FTE to 150 FTE.

Paul Dawkins went on to inform the board that the Police Pay Award is considerably the largest element of the budget setting for the current year, citing that pay alone is costing £133m. Mr Dawkins explained that the budget setting normally occurs 3-4 months before the start of the financial year and in that time there are often changes to the establishment which need to be considered. Mr Dawkins explained that the Force maintains a sophisticated system in tracking police officer costs. Mr Dawkins explained that this is achieved by costing on an individual basis, monitoring specific figures of officers and their due annual increments, anticipating potential leaving times and also considering when new cohorts might join the Force. Paul Dawkins updated the board that Leicestershire Police currently have 2242 FTE officers (2298 headcount), and that they try to maintain this average to service the target operating model of the Force. Mr Dawkins mentioned that this generated a significant underspend, noting that while this is positive it has its challenges which was agreed by the board. Mr Dawkins explained that the Force hope to maintain this average and achieve the Home Office police uplift grants returns anticipated in September and March.

DCC Sandall mentioned that due to some uncertainty from the new government around police officer pensions, the Force have experienced some increased retirement rates. DCC Sandall touched on the potential severe costings around not meeting establishment targets for police officers and police staff and the importance of keeping these figures balanced, to which CFO Kira Knott queried the slim buffer and how confident the Force are that those critical numbers won't impact on the grant received. DCC Sandall responded that the Force are expecting two cohorts of officers in the new year and are keeping a close eye on not going over total establishment numbers which would be unaffordable. The Force are balancing recruiting enough personnel to fulfil duties without making a further need down the line for reviews. Alistair Kelly added that he deems the buffer is not big enough, noting that by March 2025 the Force anticipate being at 2315 FTE. Mr Kelly advised that the Force would need to monitor this figure as to not go over levels that are affordable.

CC Nixon emphasised the uncertainty around the new government and potential announcements for policing, stating that the Force are awaiting any critical decisions that could impact future financial decision making.

Referring to efficiency savings, Mr Dawkins informed the board that 84 total posts have been reduced from the organisation, resulting in £5.4m of year-on-year sustainable savings. Mr Dawkins noted that there were two key takeaways regarding efficiency savings:

- The Force are in a position to balance the budget this week.
- The Force are set to overachieve a further £2.3m of savings.

Mr Dawkins informed the board that the Force are anticipating a staff pay award that is reflective of police officer pay which was awarded at 4.75% from 1st September 2024. Paul Dawkins explained that there will be a £175m grant available to Forces to help cover the costs, however in a letter received from the Home Office, the funding to be allocated to Leicestershire was slightly less than anticipated (£2.4m rather than £2.6m anticipated). Force added that there is concern whether this grant funding will be honoured for the following year but will monitor announcements from the government.

PCC response: CEO Trewartha raised the volume of appeals in relation to the Hay pay grades across the Force, querying the anticipated cost of potential increases in pay. Alistair Kelly responded that they do not have a figure as it is not yet possible to see what this looks like but will feed back to the board when available. CEO Trewartha asked whether this potential cost was factored into the ongoing pressures noted within this report, to which Mr Dawkins clarified that the paper excludes this.

Kira Knott queried whether the Force has noticed any impact of headcount on service delivery, to which DCC Sandall responded that the Force closely track response times, investigations and suspect monitoring. DCC Sandall explained that each of these impacts each other, for example if suspect monitoring and investigations intensify, response times might reduce. DCC Sandall added that the Force are focused on providing support to staff to ease this pressure.

b) S106 Update

Force update: Paul Dawkins provided a verbal summary of the paper to the board. Mr Dawkins noted that a number of things have occurred since the S106 strategy was signed off, most notably the re-vamping of the Memorial Garden at FHQ. Mr Dawkins mentioned the potential to re-vamp this garden in partnership with sponsorships locally.

Kira Knott and Paul Dawkins informed the board that they both sit on the S106 working group meeting chaired by Supt James Avery and Chris Stevenson who has background in local planning. Ms Knott and Mr Dawkins informed the board that during these meetings, members progress what they can at the time around S106. Mr Dawkins went on to explain that there is perhaps 'more to do' around alignment with the estates strategy.

c) MTFP

CC Nixon queried page 54-55 of the report in particular points A-D. CC Nixon noted that points A and D read similarly, and feel more medium-long term aims, whereas B and C felt like short term obvious reporting quota. This was agreed by CEO Trewartha, who stated this draft had several different versions. CEO Trewartha stated that point A was the high-level thinking and so placed this point at the beginning, referring to what decisions need to be made on what timeline to get where we need to be. CEO Trewartha further explained that point A was that first conversation of what are the priorities going to be, where do we need to increase/reduce for example for the Force to then go into the operational side and review what roles are needed where to achieve this. CEO Trewartha emphasised this was to achieve a shared vision and acknowledged that this would be more than one conversation which was agreed by the Chief Constable. CC Nixon explained that the Force need to think beyond where they want to be and must consider all of the critical decision points throughout the process. CC Nixon placed emphasis on ensuring that they establish what the 'knowns' are first.

PCC response: CEO Trewartha explained that the CC and PCC must first ensure they have same definition of high level. The PCC acknowledged that he expects there will be different scenarios and referenced the uncertainty around the government's current positions with policing but stated that he does want the Force to get ahead of the curve and provide him potential scenarios based on different outcomes and how the Force will react to these respectively. CC Nixon provided reassurance to the board that there was a significant amount of long-term strategic planning in Force, citing that some decisions made in CAG three years ago are now coming to fruition and have been planned well in advance. CC Nixon explained that it would be impossible to present a final picture that has been costed and stress tested by January as it was not that simple to produce. Rather, the CC explained that he can present the knowns including the areas that absolutely cannot be impacted by budget. CC Nixon went on to explain that he can take all of this information with potential impacts and present to the PCC at critical decision points for input. CEO Trewartha clarified that the PCC wants to view options as to what the next five years could look like with options relating to different decisions, which was agreed by the board.

Paul Dawkins explained that in line with inflation, an increase of 2-2.5% would be expected. Pay inflation assumptions were currently built into the MTFP at 2%. Kira Knott stated that in the past 2 years the government has suggested 2.5% and anything above this would be covered by government grant. It was therefore agreed by the Board that Police officer and Staff inflation would be 2.5% over the MTFP

until further information was available. Discussions took place around non-pay inflation and it was agreed that as inflation was currently at 2.2% the assumption would remain at 2%.

The PCC then moved further on in the paper. Ms Knott explained the modelling around potential precept increases of £10 querying with the board whether this felt like a sensible assumption. DCC Sandall commented that the precept is quite a key thing to be monitored and whether or not it is capped by the government. DCC Sandall noted that the precept will have a big impact on how the Force are able to deliver the Police and Crime Plan over the current PCC term. Mr Dawkins noted that possible reactions to the precept is impossible to know until they know what the grant funding is going to be and pay awards are going to be among other variables. Mr Dawkins noted that most PCCs are expecting an increase of £10 (3%), however a letter sent from the NPCC has asked for an increase of £20. Mr Dawkins explained that he did not know where the figure of £20 came from. DCC Sandall added that from the Ethics and Transparency Panel that happened that morning, it was clear that the public were not aware of some of the challenges that Force's face financially, noting that Panel members do not see information in the press around budgetary challenges. It was noted that without this knowledge it is more difficult to get the support of the public with regard to precept increases. The board agreed that the announcements expected from Central Government at the end of October would be very important.

A conversation was held around the availability of the non-emergency phone line. Discussion included whether a non-emergency line during working hours only would be a viable route for policing to manage demand. Force stated that they have not yet done a costing, and that the public will always require a critical response 24/7, further stating that they are the only public service that you can call 24 hours a day. Chris Kealey noted that an independent benchmarking exercise to attitudes regarding police phone lines would be useful and the PCC supported obtaining that information. CC Nixon noted that the non-emergency line captures callers who would otherwise possibly not get in touch with the police the next day and therefore the Force have lost that contact with potential intelligence and chance to offer victim support. PCC stated that he would be happy to defend a decision to make non-emergency phone lines during working hours only. Paul Dawkins queried whether there was anything currently in the PCCs police and crime plan that would contradict discussions, to which the PCC responded that the plan is currently being drafted and this will be a consideration.

PCC response: CEO Trewartha queried whether the increase in ICT was an exception or would this likely continue into future years, citing that the level of increases in relation to IT have only been put in at £350k when it was £1.9m this year. Board agreed to set IT increase at £0.9m.

Moving on to reserves, the PCC opened discussion by stating some of his principles around reserves, informing the board that his opinion is that reserves are generally untouched as you should never really have to use them. Of overall reserves, the PCC stated that in his opinion, it is difficult to justify a reserve balance of more than 10% of NRE unless reserves are earmarked for a specific project. An action arose for Ms Knott to develop a clear picture of total reserves for benefit of the board. DCC Sandall stated that when looking at all other Force's in the region, sustainability plans are almost always based on the use of reserves. CC Nixon suggested moving forward that the rules for use of reserves would be to help transition to force to a sustainable position over the Medium-term but with an exit strategy. The PCC agreed and clarified that what reserves must not be used for is to prop up revenue and spending which was agreed by the board.

Regarding Op Forefront, the PCC asked the Chief Constable and team where they feel the biggest pressures would be in Force. CC Nixon suggested that a more in-depth conversation would be useful. CC Nixon advised that his sense is that the external drivers of pressure are forensic costs, IT costs and organised crime. CC Nixon went on to say that internally, the pressures are the more the bureaucracy of policing including colossal volumes of paperwork across the Force. CC Nixon also touched on trauma-informed custody provision that can be seen in other forces regionally. CC Nixon further explained that as a Force in Leicestershire, the layer system allows each layer to identify their big-ticket items and clarified that the CC and PCC will sit down to discuss these items coming down the line.

Touching on the Police and Crime Plan progress, the PCC reflected positively on the development of the plan. CEO Trewartha informed the board that the OPCC are working to the 9th of October 2024 to get an initial draft to the CC for comment. CEO Trewartha informed the board that the PCC has nailed the top three priorities and that these have not changed since the Force last saw them, and that the PCC is going for a high-level plan with 13 delivery strategies under the 3 priorities.

d) POCA

The PCC queried that at the last CGB it was requested that 2 members of staff were to be funded from the POCA reserve instead of the Base budget but noted that this was not included within the POCA paper presented this time. DCC Sandall stated that this was not included in the paper on this occasion however DCC Sandall explained that the Force have reviewed the department, and the members of staff should be funded from the reserve. DCC Sandall explained that there is some nervousness around the sustainability of POCA income, however on a positive note, the DCC has been notified of an additional £400k of POCA income from the Region which will build the POCA reserves and provide an additional 6 months funding. Ms Knott stated that there was only 3 years left of funding in the reserve of which DCC Sandall confirmed that staff were on Fixed term contracts due to the volatility of funding.

6. Output of Hate Crime Review

Overview: The PCC requested an update paper on the Force's work in relation to Hate Crime since the move of the Hate Crime Team into the Prevention Directorate.

Force update: The board received a report authored by Insp Prince. The report provided a number of updates to the board, these included:

- **The re-introduction of the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel (HCSP) under the OPCC** with a renewed Terms of Reference, reinforcing accountability and a refreshed membership. The HCSP will generate a highlight report with findings from each panel which will then feed directly into the Ethics and Transparency Panel. There have been two meetings, and the first scrutiny panel has taken place. Two cases were reviewed and deemed to be appropriate. Feedback has been provided to relevant officers.
- **The re-introduction of quarterly regional hate crime meetings** with hate crime representatives from Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, and Derbyshire Police. This will enable us to share information across force borders as well as inform around policy/procedure, good practice, and other initiatives. This will include an MS Team Channel where we will have a shared working space, modernising the approach we take to regional collaboration.
- **The introduction of Hate Crime Single Points of Contact at each NPA within** Leicestershire Police. The role of these SPOCs is to provide investigation oversight and maximise opportunities with victims of hate related crimes. Part of SPOC responsibility is to contact the victim at seven and 28 day points, ensuring they have been offered onward referrals. This has also added a layer of accountability for the Officers in Charge, as the SPOCs are Sergeants. The Hate Crime Team have recently delivered refresher training, which included the national hate crime lead as a guest speaker.
- **Bi-weekly Theme Identification Neighbourhood Support (TINS) meetings** with the Hate Crime Team. This is where all hate crime has been reviewed over the past 90 days to identify any themes and fed back into the NPA to raise at their weekly threat meetings.
- **Additional training sessions to ensure compliance with the new recording requirements.** Following guidance from the College of Policing (CoP) resulting from the CoP V Miller ruling and the implications regarding the recording and retention of personal data on non-crime hate incidents (NCHI), the team have been delivering training sessions including to the Contact Management Department and Crime Bureau staff to ensure compliance in this area.

- **Support following the conflict between Israel and Hamas** to ensure the recording of related hate crime and non-crime hate incidents are being recorded under Op Acanthus. The team have monitored these daily to ensure that they are correctly recorded for feedback nationally. This enabled us to provide guidance and advice from the CPS and other forces due to the offences straddling the fine line between crime and non-crime within the context of the Israeli/HAMAS conflict.
- **Engagement in the national Hate Crime and Community Tension meeting**. The hate crime Inspector or Sergeant dial into this bi-weekly meeting. This provides a national update of crime/incident trends. Any relevant information is then cascaded to the relevant parties in force, such as NPA commanders. This has been particularly relevant in the wake of the national disorder following on from the Southport murders. This also provides a direct link into national bodies such as TellMAMA.
- **Design and launch of a new multi-agency Hate Crime virtual Hub**. Following a successful business case to the OPCC and PCC, funding has been secured for the design, launch and maintenance for an online Hub to provide consistent messaging, easily accessible resources for communities and to encourage reporting. This is being led by the Inspector for the Hate Crime Team, corporate comms and the Strategic Hate Crime Delivery Group chaired by the Head of Prevention. The first version of the Hub is expected to be launched in quarter three.

The report also gives a brief summary of current hate crime performance data, stating a decrease of 11.6% as of August 2024 compared to the same period of the previous year. The report states that while almost all NPAs have seen reductions in hate crime, 2 NPA's have had an increase, Melton and Rutland at 12.8% (increase of 6 occurrences) and Charnwood at 2.5% (increase of 5 occurrences). The board understand that hate crimes are under-reported and want to see figures and positive outcomes increase.

The report goes on to state that the work of the Hate Crime team and wider Force continues to contribute positively to the following PCP priorities:

- Policing in communities
- Supporting safer communities
- Getting the most out of our partnerships
- Curbing violent and knife crime

PCC response: Lizzie Starr opened discussion by querying what is the Force's assessment of under-reporting of hate crime. DCC Sandall responded that he does not believe Forces will ever be in a position to say that it is not being under-reported. DCC Sandall added that the Force are very pro-active in encouraging reporting particularly after the East Leicester disorder.

Mrs Starr went on to ask that of the reports reviewed by the Dedicated Decision Makers (DDMs), how many of these are later identified as having a hate crime element not initially captured by officers. DCC Sandall responded that he did not have this figure to hand, however informed the board that DDMs produce a monthly report in which this data would be available. DCC Sandall advised however that he does not believe it to be a significant number and that it is usually a case of a missed box being ticked when process has otherwise been followed correctly and victim support is still in place with protocols being followed as usual.

Referring to the NPA SPOCs in each area dedicated to following up with hate crime victims, Mrs Starr asked whether they meet regularly to share best practice. DCC Sandall responded that the central team co-ordinate the SPOCs and maintain an oversight of all areas and commanders.

Mrs Starr lastly queried the area of Charnwood, noting that they have experienced the highest rates of reported hate crimes but the lowest satisfaction rates. CC Nixon responded that the Force are fully aware of the reasoning behind these reports, referencing a particular hotel in Charnwood from which a number of reports have been made as a result of a protest occurring there earlier in the year. The board were assured that the Force are aware of this sharp rise and the reasonings behind it.

7. AOB

a) Counter Fraud Internal Report

Overview: The PCC requested a paper on how the Force are progressing against the recommendations as set out in the Counter Fraud & Whistleblowing internal audit report.

Force update: The board received a report from the Force authored by Supt Ali Tompkins which analysed the incidents identified in the previous year. Most instances involved activity related to working practices and sickness reporting.

The report also details that the CCU is working with the OPCC to publish a joint Anti-Fraud and Theft Policy incorporating all the OPCC and Police departments. A draft has been compiled and is currently being finalised within the OPCC.

PCC response: The PCC noted a sharp rise relating to counter fraud offences internally in Leicestershire Police over the years. DCC Sandall clarified that this related to cases of fraudulent working practices. DCC Sandall informed the board the force proactively identified the concerns and addressed them and highlight that officers and staff have now left the force and OPCC.

DCC Sandall noted that typically cases of fraud in Force refer to false expense claims, however DCC Sandall assured the board that the Force have a tight grip on false claims by tracking overtime and ensuring that expenses have receipts attached.

b) Firearms Licensing

Overview: The PCC requested a paper from the Force on firearms licencing processes and current turnaround times due to some correspondence in the OPCC public inbox plus verbal comments to the PCC on slow turnaround times for firearms licenses.

Force update: The report describes a backlog in grants and provides contextual information behind this such as vacancies within the administrative team which have happened as a result of the financial challenge and budget deficits. The report details that the risks are mitigated by prioritising demand renewals. The report details that recruitment is ongoing.

PCC response: Mrs Starr noted an increase in the number of pending licences compared to the figures from the 2023 CGB paper on firearms licencing and sought clarification from the Force that this did not equate to a significant number of firearms licences in people's possession that have expired. Mrs Starr suggested whether the Force could issue temporary permits to alleviate some pressure. In response, DCC Sandall stated that the Force reviewed 5 years worth of licences and only one licence was found to be incorrectly issued. Panel agreed that this was a remarkable achievement. DCC Sandall noted that there has been an increase in firearms licence possession by 100%+ which is a significant increase in demand.

DCC Sandall informed the board of ways that the Force are working to manage this demand, such as possibly introducing the use of video technology to do home checks for firearms safety and compliance checks which would have otherwise required a home visit that would take hours of officer time. DCC Sandall noted that the firearms team is smaller now than in 2023, and so the team is trying to manage becoming more efficient with less resource. Asking again whether temporary permits could be issued, DCC Sandall responded that this has been explored in the past and would not work locally due to risk factors. CC Nixon discussed the possibility of the rural crime team assisting to support increased demand and carry out some checks which was well received by the board, this will be explored in Force and fed back at a later date.

Meeting closed 16:58

Date of next meeting: 20th November 2024