

## MINUTES OF THE JOINT AUDIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON 28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021 – VIRTUAL MEETING

Part One

*Present:* P Bearpark, A Snape, D Gilbert, J Gleave

D McNeilage, Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner  
M Roberts, Chief Constable

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner:  
C Hodgson, OPCC Chief Finance Officer

Cheshire Constabulary:  
J Gill, Assistant Chief Officer  
W Bebbington, Head of Finance  
J Faulkner, Chief Accountant  
D Bryan, Head of Legal Services  
P Woods, Head of Planning and Performance

Internal Audit  
A Harrop, Assistant Director (Mersey Internal Audit Agency)

External Audit  
M Green, Director (Grant Thornton)  
L Luddington (Grant Thornton)

*Apologies: John Dwyer, Police & Crime Commissioner, L. Willis, Planning, Performance and Risk Manager*

**Minutes from the last meeting were recorded as correct.**

One matter arising.

The Chief and the PCC were to come up with ideas for single point of contact roles for JAAC members to focus on. JG happy to help with governance. TS expressed an interest in the estates and CDI reporting. PB would like to be involved helping to monitor and assist with Futures. DG suggested looking at PFI.

Comments from the Constabulary are that CDI has been audited previously and is an HMIC area.

The Assistant Chief Officer suggested that collaborations would be useful as a new assessment framework has been brought in and this would be more useful than focussing on PFI which has already been examined and is subject to independent review.

**Action: Committee to discuss offline and come back with a proposal for which to cover.**

No other actions on minutes

### **Item 3 update from PCC and CC**

DPCC –the PCC appointed his new Chief Executive on 1.11.21, Damon Taylor is very experienced and worked previously at the Constabulary. The office restructure and consultation started on the 21.09.21, and this will be a 30-day consultation. Slight growth in FTE but overall cost is lower than previous structure. Strategic Risk register – new structure fills vacancies and sorts out short term administration issues. Also undertaking a physical office restructure.

The Police & Crime Plan went to the Police & Crime Panel on Friday and was approved. It is due to be published 1.11.21. The Commissioner is sending out a survey to every house in Cheshire gathering views on policing and precept. DM ran through the previous public engagements and there were questions from the committee regarding the public engagement in Wilmslow.

No recommendation has been made on the precept to date.

CC - new appointments have been made to replace retiring Chief Officers. DCC Chris Armitz replaces DCC Julie Cooke and T/ACC Matt Burton is replaced by T/ACC Una Jennings from S Yorks. Sarah Ford is the new head of Corporate Communications. Covid rumbles on but sickness levels continue to be good. Currently levels are 4.8% – 3.6% officers and 5.8% staff

There has been an increase in the demand of the night-time economy with a number of large-scale events going ahead. Very few incidents have arisen; there were arrests for drugs at Creamfields but less than on previous occasions. From data available, there is less of a spike in covid cases from Creamfields. There is emerging but persistent protesting relating to anti vaxing at schools, in particular in Cheshire East and Cheshire West. Policing for Cop 26 Glasgow is a significant drain nationally with 2 deployments; the first October to November and a further deployment in November. It is part of the national mutual aid plan.

Coming up to a busy period with Op Treacle.

HMIC were here end July and good feedback was received which will be formalised July 2022.

Cheshire were part of the VAWG Thematic Inspection report which used examples from Cheshire, and there is an action plan on the back of that. It is worth noting that the tempo from the Government is increasing with the crime reduction plan. The Chief is happy that Cheshire Constabulary have a comprehensive framework in place.

There is the Police & Crime Plan to deliver on, plus HMIC and action plan for VAWG. The patchwork of inspection and ask is developing at quite a rate with the Government becoming more directive.

There is a CDI Inspection later this year (October); this is a bureaucratic process and the Commissioner and the Chief share the same view. To achieve 'good' requires 90% compliance. We have to hit Home Office counting rules but balance with the service to public. Crime levels are back where they were pre covid. In the Force Control Centre, there is significant demand and a number of staff leaving who were recruited from the travel industry but have left as this industry gets back on its feet. Looking at recruitment next year. There is misuse of 999 and 101 and the yellow card warning system for Cheshire has been publicised.

The largest ever County Lines operation in August saw 25 drug dealers arrested with GMP and Merseyside. Cheshire has a good relationship with both forces. Cheshire have disrupted gangs for aggravated burglary in Ellesmere Port and the Constabulary are currently featuring in the TV show Motorway Cops.

One issue is the increase in the number of absconders from Thorncross Prison. The Commissioner and the Chief along with Professor Broomhead have written raising concerns to the Minister for Justice.

DG raised a question – re new appts; Is it normal to have high turnover of Chief Officers? The Chief responded that this has happened due to retirement and achievement of 30 years' service. Going forward the chief has a 4-year contract, and the Deputy has a 5 year contract. This should enable a period of stability now.

Crime recording – from internal audits expect to hit good.

### **Statement of accounts.**

These are in a position for signing by CC and DPCC.

The Head of Finance went through changes made since the previous meeting. There is an increased level of scrutiny nationally and many authorities are not in a position to sign off annual accounts yet.

Cheshire will meet deadline to publish.

No questions.

### **External audit findings**

MG - View on position of accounts has been summarised well by the Head of Finance and the aim is to sign off the accounts by 30.9.21.

Threat to sign off is that we are waiting for assurances around pension fund valuations, expected today, plus an outstanding query around the assumptions used by police pension fund actuary GAD. Planning to issue unmodified unqualified audit opinions on both the Cheshire Constabulary and the Police and Crime Commissioner accounts. Pensions is the only area of outstanding work.

Value for money conclusion. 3-month extension to that work with expected completion by end of 2021. Focus on MFSS contract, no issues arising. Very positive report.

PCC and CC – same level of confidence. All sorted for signing on Thursday.

LL went through the external audit findings report. All now completed with the exception of pensions. Awaiting information on the national assumptions that GAD use, these fell outside of Grant Thornton's acceptable range. Cheshire Pension fund is awaiting these too.

VFM work not completed but done enough around MFSS which is the biggest risk. No significant matters.

JAAC members raised a query around the recommendation from 2019/20 which has not been implemented. Is the current arrangement future proof? The Head of Finance explained why the POCA account is not a separate bank account, as there are stronger approvals having it in the current process under Oracle. Will revisit in 18 months, there is no outstanding urgent action to change anything.

In summary – 2 pension issues to address. Recommend subject to these being resolved for PCC and CC to sign the accounts.

### **AGS**

The OPCC Chief Finance Officer went through the track changes on the report showing amendments since the previous meeting.

Recommendation from the chair is to sign the AGS

### **INTERNAL AUDIT - MIAA**

AMH went through the Progress report which shows two reports have been finalised– Collaborations partnerships review on NWMPG; Covid 19 review substantial reassurance received for both.

Almost at draft report stage for Cyber Crime review and the Body Worn Video has been scoped and will be issued as TOR for wider consultation before review is started in October.

Well on the way in terms of Audit plan and upcoming projects key financial controls and Q4 delivering the remainder of the plan.

Performance against the audit contract – number of reviews and level of assurance obtained, this is all on track.

The Chief raised a question on the Cybercrime audit - when will the report be issued? AMH stated this will be in 3 weeks' time. Welcome addition to the Constabulary's PBB process on this.

DPCC comment on Covid report. The PCC is working with the Constabulary to ensure there will be no undue delays going forward on getting strategies through.

The Chief advised that DCC Armit to review the product of the Planning, Performance and Risk Manager's work and the regions are adopting best practice.

Areas for improvement, accept that recommendations are accepted and implemented. This process is already in place and works very smoothly.

Item 8 - Strategic Risk Register

To be covered in part 2

Item 9 Service Assurance Plan

The Head of Planning and Performance went through the paper. This is a regular report, and everyone was happy

Item 10 Forward plan review

Question mark over the timing of the HMICFRS Value for Money profiles. Until these are finalised and received from HMICFRS we are unable to bring them to the committee.

**Action - PW to chase up**

**AOB**

No other business discussed, part one meeting concluded.