



Governance and Scrutiny Board agenda – 17 July 2024 13:30-15:00 and 15:30-17:00

Venue: Avon Room, Police HQ and Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Clare Moody, Police and Crime Commissioner

Sarah Crew, Chief Constable (CC)

Alice Ripley, OPCC Chief of Staff

Jon Cummins, Assistant Chief Constable

Paul Butler OPCC Chief Finance Officer (CFO)

James Davis, ASP Portfolio Delivery Manager

Jason Sims, Staff Officer to Chief Constable

Vicky Ellis, OPCC Secretariat Manager (Minutes)

Partial meeting attendance:

Nick Adams, ASP Chief Finance Officer

Hannah Watts, Head of Business Services

Jen Grannan, Head of Digital and Projects

Richard Snook, Project Manager

Jason Shears, Superintendent, Supporting Head of Performance and Assurance

Jon Dowey, Head of Performance and Insight

Neil Bennett, Director of Communications and Engagement

GOVERNANCE

1 Apologies

Jon Reilly, Deputy Chief Constable

Louise Hutchison, Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development

Will White, Assistant Chief Constable

Sally Fox, OPCC Director of Performance and Accountability

Ben Valentine, OPCC Senior Performance and Governance Manager

2 Minutes and Action Updates

The minutes of the Governance and Scrutiny Board held on 12 June were agreed as accurate and for publication.

The Board had received updates to close several of the actions due for an update at the July Board.

The remaining actions that were due for an update at the July Board were discussed and further updates were requested in relation to the following:

- Action 69/23 – small issues following the upgrade to the telephony system continued to be experienced and work was ongoing to resolve these. Further upgrades were underway, and it was believed this would resolve the remaining issues. The Board requested an update at the next meeting.
- Action 78/23 – the Board requested an indicative timeframe on the creation of the performance dashboard for monitoring the Anti-Social Behaviour Service Standard
- Action 23/24 – a structured debrief report of the procurement for the Chance to Change commissioning had been shared with the OPCC and had also been subject to in depth discussion at the Community Network meeting in June. This conversation will continue, and the intention is to look at a workshop with internal and external stakeholders after the summer about what is needed for ASP procurement processes to be institutionally inclusive going forward.

3 Finance

a) Draft Annual Accounts

The Board had previously discussed the financial outturn position at the meetings in May and June. The draft accounts had been discussed at the Joint Audit Committee meeting (JAC) held in June and questions on the account were due to be submitted by JAC members by 20 July 2024.

The Board noted all concerns raised at previous meetings had been adjusted and addressed and the accounts had received sufficient scrutiny.

It was noted the JAC had recently recruited new members and the Chief Finance Officers for the OPCC and ASP had provided a briefing to assist them to understand the difference between Local Authority accounts and commercial accounts. The Board were advised that when the accounts are presented to the JAC at their September meeting the answers to their questions on the accounts would be published.

The audit of the accounts had commenced, and a joint update would be provided in mid-August.

The accounts would be re-submitted to the Governance and Scrutiny Board following the JAC in September with confirmation from the JAC members and the auditors that there were no concerns.

The Board noted the Accounts were used to show compliance to legislation requirements and also to financial reporting standards.

The PCC asked about pension liabilities and was advised the accounts focus on the local pension scheme.

4 Portfolio Highlight Report

The ASP Portfolio Delivery Manager highlighted to the Board the projects identified as priorities, the number of projects that would meet the threshold for review at GSB and those projects which had moved to a different stage of the project cycle. Three business cases were due to be discussed at ASP's upcoming Portfolio Steering Board and it was likely these

would be referred to the next GSB. Monthly project narratives would be kept succinct for the new report format.

It was noted that the PCC does still have the discretion to request oversight of other projects at the GSB, even if they don't meet the financial thresholds for automatic referral and the CC agreed ASP would be happy to share any projects as requested.

The move to Plymouth House in Bath for the ASP team was discussed. It was noted that the Bath and North East Somerset (BaNES) CCTV team have not yet confirmed their new location, though ASP have advised there will not be space at Plymouth House to accommodate them, noting there would be space at Keynsham if required.

The Board noted the delays to the implementation of the new Enterprise Resource Platform and requested an update on the total cost implications of revision to timetable, as well as a new go live date.

The business case for the site at Horsey Lane, Yeovil was noted as due for discussion at the ASP management board and was expected to confirm that refurbishment of the existing site as the most cost effective option.

The PCC asked about the Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) project, to understand how ASP were checking and testing the decision making where the outcome was not to attend the call for service. The ACC advised Phase 1 had been implemented, with the next phases due to be reviewed next. There had been daily meetings with partners during the implementation but these had now finished and no issues had been raised. An Inspector was overseeing the project and ensuring callers received the right response.

The PCC noted the importance of the Mental Health Link Officers to the RCRP project. The ACC described the training the officers had received for the role and the positive feedback received so far, noting there was an option for officers to rotate out of the role after 6 months if it did not suit them.

5 Decisions/Business Cases

a) Final Business Case – Digital Interview Recording

The Board noted this was a straightforward decision given the defunct equipment, one non-compliant supplier, one prohibitively expensive supplier, and the preferred bid which matched the procurement of neighbouring forces.

The Board discussed the concern around the extent to which this type of technology provision lacks genuine competition and leaves forces vulnerable to a pseudo-monopoly market position, noting the due diligence and force visits undertaken for assurance.

It was noted a meeting had been scheduled to consider more collaborative ways of working across the South West police forces.

The Board approved the business case as recommended.

b) Outline Business Case – Bath Plymouth House

The Board discussed the Outline Business Case which outlined option 3 as the recommended option. Benefits expected under this option included utilisation – a one site solution which would bring all teams together; investing in the people serving the public with a sensitive design and modern facility e.g. allocation of quiet rooms, enhanced kitchen offer, and gym facilities; good location for serving the public in the heart of the city. The sustainability of the building had been considered and the project covered improved roof insulation, improved windows and thermal ability and the installation of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging units. Savings were expected following the cessation of rent at Lewis House and Redbridge House.

The Board discussed the efficacy of the initial surveys, which had been undertaken on a pragmatic approach and iteratively. The building surveyor and consultants recommend requirements, and it was noted a more thorough approach would have been taken if there had been time, but this had been limited on this occasion. There had been no issues raised and the board noted the team had moved at an impressive pace and secured a good site.

The Board discussed the potential risk of being unable to extend the lease at Lewis House to match the date Plymouth House would be available, the project team believed this would be accommodated by the Council.

The Board approved option 3 as recommended by the business case.

SCRUTINY

6 Chief Constable's Update

The Chief Constable highlighted the HMICFRS Inspection period due to begin in the coming months and some of the work ASP were undertaking to prepare for this, which included the initiation of three new gold groups to work on the remaining outstanding AFIs.

The Chief Officer Group had also spent time at their recent Strategic Planning Meeting clarifying progress made on the change programmes designed to achieve the long term vision.

The Chief highlighted two areas that had been identified to be progressed whilst also preparing for the Inspection and these were:

- The use of video conference to respond to some calls from the public; noting this is being used successfully by other police forces in the country and it was anticipated this could prevent some of the delays callers experienced in response times and could resolve issues without creating crimes to be allocated;
- Crime allocation work – improving the triaging of crimes so that only those that have a chance to be solved are allocated for investigation, and managing those that can't so as not to create high expectations that can't be met. In the short term this would be undertaken in the control room as calls come in, in the long term this work was part of programme 3.

The Chief continued to reflect on leadership and had invited a consultant to assist the Chief Officer Group to consider how they operate in order to be a high performing, strategic team, working to a leadership model that aligns to the leadership programmes.

The Chief noted that the PCC's new Police and Crime Plan was being worked on and ASP are ready to work to the new priorities when they are published.

The Chief was aware there was still work to do to win back the public trust and confidence, noting there was more to do in some areas than others.

Abstractions of new officers on their courses would continue to present challenges over the next two years but the Chief Officers are working to create as much time and capacity as possible to support the workforce to cope with these abstractions.

The importance of IT was noted, its role as an enabling function has been superseded and it is now an operational function and this would continue to grow.

7 Key Organisational Risks and Issues

The report to the board highlighted the latest data (for the year 2023) which showed the average time it takes for ASP to charge an offender in adult rape cases is 626 days, more than double the national average of 306 days. ASP were asked what was contributing to the delays locally.

The cases that have taken over 600 days were cases which were investigated before the Bluestone model was introduced. For cases in the Bluestone team the time from recording the offence to charging the offender was 75 days for the last two years. It was noted the volume of cases in ASP was also one of the challenges, ASP have got the highest number of rapes recorded of most police forces. This was seen as a measure of confidence that victims believe ASP will solve their case as well as a good indication of crime recording compliance.

Every case gets looked at and sent to a Bluestone investigator – ASP have tripled the volume of offenders being charged and each of these cases takes time to investigate and build. It was also noted another factor that affected the timeliness of charging was case file quality not being high and this adds to the time it takes to get the case to end point of charge. When data is downloaded from mobile phones and computers this will also add to the length of time an investigation can take time. Before Bluestone the standard practice was to take all devices and download all material –this doesn't happen as much now but where this is done it can make the whole process longer. The new SOZE software will assist with the examination of data when received and reduce the time this part of the investigation takes.

There is a dedicated team looking at file quality, identifying any issues, allocating to an owner to resolve and feeding back any learning to investigators. There is a dedicated group of officers and supervisors putting the issues right.

The PCC also raised two issues that had not been covered in the paper, road safety and the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) into Serious Youth Violence in Somerset.

Road safety was a topic that had been raised with the PCC by members of the public as well as by members of ASP. It was noted that due to various abstractions and vacancies the Roads Policing Unit (RPU) was not always able to resource to minimum levels. This has an impact on the service being delivered and also on those delivering the service. The PCC wanted to understand what was being done to address the challenges.

ASP had previously taken a strategic decision to over establish the patrol teams to assist with abstractions whilst the new officers were being recruited and trained. ASP had therefore filled vacancies in Neighbourhood Policing Teams whenever they could which had impacted on the RPU resourcing levels. The Superintendent and the Chief Superintendent have agreed ASP can meet the requirement to police the strategic roads at the moment.

It was noted there is also a small road safety team and a Traffic Management Unit working with partner agencies to engineer roads; as well as the speed enforcement unit, analysts, Community Speedwatch and Special Constables – it is not just the RPU responsible for policing the roads in A&S.

The Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) into Serious Youth Violence in Somerset identified serious failings. The HMICFRS inspectorate are alert to these issues and recognise vulnerability as an area that needs a focus in Avon & Somerset Police.

The report provided to the board states that ASP effectively manages the risk posed by child abuse offenders, although the findings from the Child Protection Inspection included a recommendation about safeguarding. The PCC wanted to understand some of the key things ASP were doing to improve how they provided safeguarding to vulnerable people.

ASP are working with the lead safeguarding partners, the Local Authorities, the ICB and education to review how they work together to safeguard children and must publish their response by December detailing their arrangements and priorities. One safeguarding meeting had already been held and the lead safeguarding partners would meet again before the end of August.

8 Tackling Disproportionality and Racism Update

The Board noted the National Black Police Association (BPA) had recently withdrawn support for the National Police Chief's Council Police Race Action Plan (PRAP) and discussed how these national challenges might affect the local action on the PRAP.

ASP have continued to work with the national chair of the BPA and have not seen any deterioration in collaboration.

The Board also discussed the disproportionality of strip search data and how ASP are addressing this issue. ASP have changed the policy and practice around searches, which has been launched and training provided for officers. The new policy includes additional scrutiny as an Inspector is required to sign off searches. ASP will be monitoring the data and will investigate any trends identified with individual officers.

ASP have set up an Independent Scrutiny Board to hold them to account in this area of work and will work with a Black Consultancy Consortium to ensure they are as inclusive as possible.

ASP held a community event to mark the one year anniversary of the Chief announcing that the force was Institutionally Racist and to advise the community of some of the work they have been doing to change this.

The Board discussed the Chance to Change project. The project had launched in June and had 150 places funded for the year and was so far on track. The Board requested a quarterly update on the project.

9 Performance against Police and Crime Plan

a) Integrated Performance and Quality Report (IPQR)

The Board noted the IPQR and the pressure on almost every part of the system and discussed the ways ASP manage this to avoid a significant service failure. ASP outlined the meetings and processes that allow them to review the data, flag areas of concern and the flexibility to move resources as required and the continual nature of these processes. Part of the pressure comes from being an under-funded and under-resourced force compared to other forces nationally, as a result of the national funding model.

The Board noted the new Government's commitment to 13,000 more officers, PCSOs and Specials, which would need to be funded via savings and efficiencies.

The Chief highlighted that despite being under resourced ASP are still providing a good service to the public and work efficiently. ASP have an ambitious programme of change and innovation looking at what else can be done to create as much space and time to do the best policing.

The Board discussed Offender Management, as the report stated "it is expected that we will continue to have the AFI around outstanding visits and ARMS assessments, as our performance has decreased since the last PEEL inspection". The ACC advised the Board that since the report had been written the position had improved, but acknowledged there were still some challenges. A gold group had been established to oversee the work and to clear the backlog of visits and additional staff had been moved in to assist this. There are greater demands on the team and work is underway to understand this and agree a different approach to the work.

b) Assurance Report – Engagement with minority groups (protected characteristics)

The report referenced "The connections between Neighbourhoods and the Corp Comms team are strong. With more structured strategic oversight that will only improve further." The Board requested more information on this point.

The Director of Communications and Engagement advised that the team had only relatively recently reached establishment following the decision to expand. This meant the team were inexperienced and still learning – there are good tactical connections between Neighbourhood Policing and the Corporate Comms team and this will be expanded to improve the engagement side. A group of senior leaders from across ASP have been brought together to enable better understanding of what is happening across the force and highlight and amplify the pockets of good work already undertaken.

The Director will also be looking at ideas raised at the Strategic Planning Meeting to focus in particular on the under 25s, to understand the different way that U25 approach life and policing and how best to engage with them.

The Director had also been working with the Neighbourhood and Partnership lead to prepare neighbourhood policing engagement plans, noting the engagement strategy has to be **every** contact that comes in the organisation. The team were linked in with the cultural work underway through programme 7.

The Board discussed the opportunities of expanding the Digi-Desks, which currently in ASP were essentially a listening service of 3 people. It was noted other forces have bigger Digi-Desks which were also able to respond to social media comments and stories. Corporate Comms are also increasing their capability to develop video content to improve engagement with different media platforms. The team are looking to improve and increase the use of platforms and technology to pull in mentions and references.

The Board discussed the opportunity to review and improve the local Police and Crime Survey as part of this work to better understand engagement.

10 HMICFRS Recommendations and Areas For Improvement (AFIs)

ASP had introduced a Quarterly Homicide Prevention Review governance meeting in June and it was agreed the OPCC could attend to observe for assurance.

ASP provided an oral update on the seven outstanding AFIs, which were largely related to vulnerability areas and two of which have some longer term challenges to completion and ASP will be able to demonstrate progress made and mitigation. The AFI relating to DVDS would be closed.

11 People and Organisational Development Update

The PCC queried the differing numbers of officers shown as Taser trained between the People and OD report and the IPQR. ASP confirmed the required number as detailed in the STRA was 650. The discrepancy was in relation to those who are trained but their training is out of date and they are due to attend a refresher course.

The low pass rate for the National Investigators Exam was discussed, this had been an anomaly for one course. It is expected to improve and ASP are monitoring it.

The report showed higher levels of sickness within Criminal Justice (primarily Custody Sergeants) and the board discussed this, noting that it is more of a contained environment so more susceptible to the spread of germs. It is a known issue which ASP continue to monitor and in the last month since the report had been prepared it had reduced.

A.O.B

No other items of business raised

Items for Publication

The Board agreed the following items for publication:

- Minutes from Governance and Scrutiny Board 12 June 2024
- Decision Notice for Final Business Case – Digital Interview Recording
- Decision Notice for Outline Business Case – Bath Plymouth House

Date of the next Governance and Scrutiny Board: 13 August 2024 11:30-13:00 and 13:30-15:00