



Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

PUBLIC SCRUTINY BOARD

Notes of the Public Scrutiny Board held on 29 April 2026 at Runcorn Town Hall.

PRESENT: D Price, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
M Evans, Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)

Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner

D Taylor, Chief Executive

G Southern, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC)

C Gilbody, Head of Scrutiny & Governance

A Murphy, Governance Officer

J Seed, Digital Media and Web Manager

Cheshire Constabulary

N Bailey, Chief People Officer

P Woods, Head of Performance & Planning

Members of the public observed the meeting online.

1. Introductions

At the Public Scrutiny Meeting held on 29th April 2026, the Police and Crime Commissioner, chaired the meeting and outlined the purpose of the meeting: a deep dive into the workforce.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Public Scrutiny Board held on 23rd March 2026 were approved. There were no outstanding actions.

3. Opening Statement – Deputy Chief Constable

The Commissioner invited the Deputy Chief Constable to provide a brief introduction.

The Deputy Chief Constable apologised for the absence of the Chief Constable and provided an overview of force performance. He reported that recorded crime for 2025–26 had reduced by 1.3% compared to the previous year, with burglary and theft both down by 9% and criminal damage down by 5%. He highlighted that recent national crime figures placed Cheshire among the safest force areas nationally, including the 11th lowest overall crime rate.

He advised that Cheshire currently has the highest charge rate nationally for all crime, including violent offences, stalking and harassment, and sexual offences. The force also

performs strongly across several specialist areas, including firearms licensing and the investigation of online child abuse, the latter having been recognised as outstanding practice by HMICFRS.

The Deputy Chief Constable explained that the force's People Strategy underpins this performance, noting that approximately 77% of the force budget is spent on staffing. Since the Police Uplift Programme, officer numbers have increased to 2,401. Despite this, the Force Management Statement outlines significant ongoing operational pressures, particularly within vulnerability and public protection.

He confirmed that Cheshire is on track to meet the National Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee for 2026–27, continues to attract high volumes of applicants, and has made progress in strengthening detective capacity, now at 87%. He also highlighted strong arrangements for supervision, leadership development, and wellbeing, diversity and inclusion.

4. Scrutiny Theme – Workforce

People Strategy and Managing Change

The Commissioner asked whether the workforce is fit to manage substantial change, including the adoption of new technology and AI, while maintaining ethical standards and public confidence.

The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that he was confident in the workforce's ability to manage this change. He highlighted Cheshire's leadership in innovation, including the appointment of an Assistant Chief Constable with responsibility for innovation. He emphasised that AI and new technology are being introduced responsibly, with appropriate safeguards, ethical oversight and a "human in the loop" and noted recent written endorsement of the force's approach by the Home Office.

Workforce Establishment and Role Design

The Commissioner questioned whether roles are undertaken at the right grade and by the right role type, and how confidently the force redesigns roles where warranted powers are not required.

The Deputy Chief Constable explained the force's Priority-Based Budgeting (PBB) approach, which assesses demand, risk and value across the organisation. He outlined that certain posts legitimately require warranted officers due to statutory or operational requirements, such as firearms command. He also described how moderated officers who are unable to undertake frontline duties are deployed into roles where they add value and confirmed that deployable officers are not routinely used in posts where warranted powers are unnecessary.

Resilience to Demand and Pressure Points

The Commissioner sought assurance on whether the workforce model is resilient to demand spikes and sustained pressure, and where current pressure points are most acute.

The Deputy Chief Constable advised that recent increases in officer numbers provide flexibility to respond to both local and national demand surges. However, he highlighted that offences involving vulnerable victims – including rape, child abuse, domestic abuse and safeguarding – have more than doubled

Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee

The Commissioner emphasised the public importance of visible neighbourhood policing and PCSOs. He asked for clarity on the current workforce model and the force's position in relation to the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.

The Deputy Chief Constable explained that the baseline for the Guarantee was 249 neighbourhood resources and that the target is 297. At the end of March 2026, the force had 300.8 neighbourhood resources, exceeding the requirement. He confirmed that for 2026–27 the target remains 297, with a change in workforce mix agreed through budget decisions: 30 fewer PCSOs covered through additional police officers. The Commissioner sought specific clarity on PCSO numbers. The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that the budgeted establishment is 57 PCSOs, with 51 currently in post. He explained that recruitment is managed in sensible cohorts due to training costs.

The Commissioner expressed concern that failure to reach the budgeted PCSO figure could undermine public confidence and stated that further work was required to clarify the roadmap to achieving this commitment.

Workforce Capacity, Recruitment and Retention

The Commissioner questioned patterns of attrition, particularly among officers with less than two years' service.

The Deputy Chief Constable reported that overall attrition in 2025–26 was at its lowest level for four years. Officer attrition has reduced primarily due to fewer transfers and retirements. Cheshire has moved from the 13th highest attrition rate nationally to 32nd, with a resignation rate below the national average. Themes from early service leavers included work-life balance and expectations of the role, leading to changes in recruitment and familiarisation processes.

The Commissioner asked about the consistency of exit interviews and the use of learning.

The Deputy Chief Constable explained that exit interviews cannot be mandated but questionnaires are issued, monitored and followed up. Data is analysed by People Services and shared with senior leaders to inform workforce design, supervision and retention initiatives. The Commissioner requested data on completion rates of exit questionnaires as a follow-up.

Specialist Capability

The Commissioner asked whether there is sufficient supervisory capacity to manage specialist and investigative functions.

The Deputy Chief Constable outlined governance arrangements for managing specialist accreditation and supervision. He reported that detective capability has increased significantly, with PIP2 accreditation now at 87%, compared with 51% several years ago. He highlighted the success of the direct entry detective programme and strong performance in national examinations.

Leadership, Standards and Performance

The Commissioner questioned the sustainability of the leadership pipeline over the next three to five years.

The Deputy Chief Constable described workforce forecasting, talent grids and leadership development programmes. He highlighted a renewed strength in sergeant recruitment, with all vacancies filled and a pool of successful candidates awaiting posting.

In response to questions about abstraction and performance pressures, the Deputy Chief Constable emphasised that supervision includes managing performance, welfare and operational delivery. He outlined leadership training programmes and initiatives developed through the sergeants' network to improve supervisory effectiveness.

Health, Wellbeing and Sickness

The Commissioner expressed concern about increasing sickness levels and sought assurance regarding resilience.

The Deputy Chief Constable advised that sickness remains broadly stable with seasonal variation, particularly during winter months, and that there is no evidence of systemic resilience or retention risk. He outlined strong governance, early intervention processes and a comprehensive wellbeing offer, including trauma support and proactive monitoring of high-risk teams.

The Commissioner requested that sickness data be reviewed over a longer time period to demonstrate trends more clearly.

Diversity, Inclusion and Culture

The Commissioner asked how performance is assessed beyond volume metrics, including ethical decision-making and leadership behaviour.

The Deputy Chief Constable explained the force's performance framework, which combines quantitative and qualitative measures and is underpinned by the Leadership Charter. The Commissioner raised questions about changes in workforce diversity data. The Deputy Chief Constable clarified that reductions in "not declared" data indicate increased disclosure rather than negative trends.

The Commissioner suggested that elements of the workforce diversity data be referred to the Ethics Panel for further assurance and discussion, which was welcomed.

Overall Risk and Forward Look

The Commissioner asked how confident the force is that workforce plans are operationally and financially sustainable.

The Deputy Chief Constable outlined significant financial challenges, including the requirement for further savings alongside increasing operational demand. He emphasised the importance of PBB, strategic planning and cautious but purposeful adoption of AI to drive efficiency, while maintaining public safety.

In response to a final question on measuring workforce productivity, the Deputy Chief Constable explained that a range of value-for-money profiles, performance reviews, audits and quality assurance processes are used to assess outcomes, effectiveness and productivity rather than volume alone.

5. Any Other Business

None reported.

The Commissioner thanked the Deputy Chief Constable for his detailed responses and reaffirmed the importance of scrutiny in providing transparency, accountability and public reassurance. The meeting was then closed.