



Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

PUBLIC SCRUTINY BOARD

Notes of the Public Scrutiny Board held on 21 July 2026 at Runcorn Town Hall.

Present: D Price, Police and Crime Commissioner
M Roberts, Chief Constable

Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner
G Southern, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
D Taylor, Chief Executive
A Murphy, Governance Officer

Cheshire Constabulary
M Evans, Deputy Chief Constable
P Woods, Head of Performance & Planning

Members of the public observed the meeting online.

1. Introductions

The Commissioner opened the meeting and emphasised the importance of public scrutiny sessions in providing transparency, accountability, and assurance to the public of Cheshire. The Commissioner outlined that the refreshed Police and Crime Plan builds on the existing plan, taking account of changing policing demands, public feedback, and emerging challenges. He said that the session would examine complaints, use of force, emergency response performance, domestic abuse, sexual offences, neighbourhood policing, and public confidence.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the previous Public Scrutiny Board held on 29 June 2026 were approved.

3. Quarterly Performance Update against the Police and Crime Plan

The Performance Pack setting out performance against the police and crime plan was made available via the OPCC website.

4. Commissioner's Questions

Slide 34 - Neighbourhood Policing

The Commissioner opened the questions by focusing on the number of PCSOs in Cheshire as slide 34 shows that PCSO numbers are currently at 49.



Question

What is being done urgently and specifically to increase PCSO numbers, and can residents realistically expect to see these numbers moving back in the right direction?

Answer

The Chief Constable acknowledged the decline in PCSO numbers and explained that recruitment had been constrained by funding considerations and the need to run cost-effective training courses with sufficient candidate numbers.

He said that following a review of financial forecasts and workforce attrition, the Constabulary plans to launch a PCSO recruitment campaign in September 2026. Successful recruits are expected to join the organisation early in 2027, restoring numbers towards the agreed target level.

The Commissioner welcomed the commitment to recruitment and noted that it would provide reassurance to residents concerned about visible neighbourhood policing.

Question

What is the current compliance rate with the requirement to have a named neighbourhood officer and PCSO in every area?

Answer

The Chief Constable confirmed that compliance currently stands at 100%. He said that a monthly monitoring process is in place, overseen by designated officers, to ensure continued compliance despite factors such as sickness, maternity leave, or staff departures.

Question

Are PCSOs receiving the necessary training and support?

Answer

The Chief Constable confirmed that PCSOs operate as integral members of neighbourhood policing teams and receive ongoing support and supervision. He said that dedicated neighbourhood sergeants oversee delivery of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, and further recruitment and training are planned to follow the September recruitment exercise.



Question

What are the current abstraction levels for neighbourhood policing and how do they compare with targets?

Answer

The Chief Constable reported abstraction rates of:

- April: 12%
- May: 23%
- June: 13%

He explained that the target is to remain at or below 10% and higher abstraction rates were attributed to exceptional operational demand, including record levels of 999 calls, major operations in Crewe, ongoing public protection activity, demonstrations, hot weather, increased night-time economy activity and policing requirements associated with the World Cup. The Chief Constable stated that these factors explain the temporary increase and that the aspiration remains to keep abstractions at or below the target.

Question

What is being done to improve neighbourhood crime outcomes?

Answer

The Chief Constable explained that improved outcomes are the result of a whole-force approach, including:

- Outstanding emergency response performance
- Investment in detective capacity
- Improved investigative structures
- Enhanced digital forensics capability
- Strong performance management
- Effective neighbourhood policing activity

The Chief Constable advised that Cheshire currently achieves some of the highest charge rates in the country across numerous offence categories, including burglary, residential burglary, sexual offences, violence offences and stalking and harassment.

Question

What measures are used to assess the effectiveness of neighbourhood policing teams beyond crime outcomes?



Answer

The Chief Constable explained that effectiveness is assessed through a combination of crime outcomes, public confidence measures, inspection findings, and external recognition of operational excellence across multiple departments including firearms licensing, vetting, and fleet management. The Constabulary also monitors public confidence through survey data and independent assessments.

Question

Is the revised neighbourhood policing model delivering improved outcomes?

Answer

The Chief Constable clarified that the policing model itself has not changed, only the workforce mix. Evidence of effectiveness includes reductions in key crime categories, improved charge rates, and extensive use of preventative measures such as Community Protection Notices, Domestic Violence Protection Notices, and closure orders.

The Constabulary continues to deliver neighbourhood engagement commitments, including public surgeries, school visits, faith community engagement, and communication through Cheshire Alert.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Question

How will neighbourhood policing manage anti-social behaviour during the summer period?

Answer

The Chief Constable outlined a layered approach involving:

- Strong neighbourhood policing coverage
- Weekly reviews of ASB hotspots
- Local problem-solving plans
- Strategic governance structures
- Flexible deployment of resources in response to weather, school holidays, and local events

Additional resources are deployed to identified hotspots when required, particularly around open water locations and seasonal demand.



Complaints

Question

Can you explain the current complaints picture and how the Constabulary learns from complaints?

Answer

The Chief Constable stated that complaints are not automatically evidence of wrongdoing but are an important source of organisational learning. Complaints are analysed to identify recurring themes and inform improvements in training, supervision, and processes.

Recent themes include service standards, communication, updates provided to victims and expectations regarding police responses. Complaint data is regularly reviewed by local command teams and chief officers, with additional scrutiny from the OPCC, IOPC and community oversight groups.

Question

What does success look like in managing complaints and is there a target?

Answer

The Chief Constable advised that the Constabulary does not seek to use targets to reduce complaint numbers because complaints provide valuable feedback and should be encouraged where concerns exist. Instead, success is measured through:

- Timely handling of complaints
- Quality of investigations
- Identification of learning opportunities
- Implementation of improvements

The Chief Constable stated that complaints will never reduce to zero given the proactive nature of policing and the increased level of enforcement activity undertaken by Cheshire Police.

Use of Force

Question

Does the increase in use of force forms reflect increased force being used or improved recording?

Answer

The Chief Constable stated that the increase is primarily due to significantly improved compliance with recording requirements rather than an increase in force being used.



A focused programme led by the Assistant Chief Constable has improved awareness and compliance among officers. The enhanced recording enables better identification of trends and informs training and organisational learning. The Constabulary continues to ensure robust supervision and independent scrutiny through community review panels.

Crime Outcomes

Question

What does "Outcome Brought to Justice" (OBTJ) mean and why is it important?

Answer

The Chief Constable explained that OBTJ refers to crimes where the offender has been identified and some form of formal outcome has been achieved. This may include:

- Criminal charges
- Out-of-court disposals
- Restorative justice outcomes
- Other formal sanctions

The measure is important because it demonstrates that offences have been resolved and that victims receive closure.

Question

The Commissioner noted concerns raised by the Out of Court Resolution Panel regarding missed opportunities when applying conditions to offenders. Is the Constabulary working to improve conditions attached to out-of-court resolutions?

Answer

The Chief Constable advised that he was not aware of specific issues but committed to reviewing any evidence provided by the OPCC.

Question

Is the new sentencing legislation having an impact in Cheshire?

Answer

The Chief Constable stated that the impact is already becoming visible. Fewer offenders are receiving custodial sentences, including some repeat offenders who previously would have been imprisoned. Emerging impacts include:

- More prolific offenders remaining in the community

- Reduced remand rates
- Increased prison recalls
- Increased breaches of electronic tagging conditions



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The Constabulary is gathering evidence locally and contributing to national evidence gathering through the National Police Chiefs' Council.

Emergency Response Performance

Question

What has delivered improvements in Grade 2 response performance?

Answer

The Chief Constable attributed the improvement to:

- Increased staffing in the Force Control Centre
- Improved remuneration helping retain experienced staff
- Enhanced staffing levels
- Better demand analysis and resource deployment
- Strong vulnerability assessment processes
- Effective performance management

He added that HMICFRS has recognised these improvements.

Question

Do call handlers still build rapport while managing demand and reducing waiting times?

Answer

The Chief Constable confirmed that they do and said that training emphasises empathy, active listening, and vulnerability identification. Staff receive ongoing mentoring, quality assurance and immediate feedback where required. The Constabulary is also exploring how AI can assist call handling without reducing service quality.

Question

What incidents typically receive a Grade 3 response?

Answer

The Chief Constable explained that Grade 3 incidents are those requiring police attendance but without immediate risk, vulnerability, or evidential urgency. He said that attendance is scheduled according to risk and operational priorities.

Question

Is there any risk attached to delayed attendance for Grade 3 incidents?



Answer

The Chief Constable acknowledged that any delay carries some risk; however, all incidents are subject to risk assessment and ongoing review. Resources are prioritised according to threat, harm and risk, with emergency and priority incidents taking precedence.

Domestic Abuse

Question

Does the reduction in recorded domestic abuse offences reflect a genuine reduction in offending?

Answer

The Chief Constable advised caution when interpreting reductions. He said that while offending may be reducing, maintaining public confidence in reporting remains essential. The Constabulary has significantly increased arrests for domestic abuse, from approximately 22% of incidents in 2020-21 to around 55-60% currently. The Chief Constable believes that consistent positive action is likely having a deterrent effect but warned against drawing premature conclusions.

Question

How is the Constabulary ensuring victims remain supported while improving outcomes?

Answer

The Chief Constable stated that victim support and successful outcomes are inseparable. Victims receive safeguarding and support regardless of whether a prosecution proceeds. The Constabulary uses integrated local teams including public protection specialists, detectives, investigators, and neighbourhood officers to provide holistic support and improve outcomes.

Question

How are counter-allegations in domestic abuse cases managed fairly?

Answer

The Chief Constable stated that investigations remain evidence-led and open-minded. He said that officers examine:

- Independent evidence
- Previous history
- Digital evidence
- Witness accounts



The objective is to identify the full circumstances and reach an evidence-based conclusion.

Sexual Offences

Question

What types of offences are included within the sexual offences category?

Answer

The Chief Constable explained that sexual offences include a broad range of crime types, including:

- Rape
- Sexual assault
- Child sexual exploitation
- Grooming offences
- Indecent exposure

He said that each offence type requires different investigative and preventative approaches.

Question

What preventative activity is being undertaken to reduce sexual offending?

Answer

The Chief Constable highlighted a range of preventative initiatives including:

- School-based consent education
- Night-time economy safeguarding measures
- Ask Angela campaigns
- Staff training for licensed premises
- Operation Vigilant
- Behavioural detection patrols
- Safe refuge facilities
- Safer Streets initiatives
- Robust investigation of indecent exposure offences

Question

Are staff trained in trauma-sensitive practices?

Answer

The Chief Constable confirmed that staff receive training throughout their careers, with additional focus placed on those most likely to engage with victims. Training includes:



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- Empathy and active listening techniques
- Vulnerability identification
- Trauma awareness
- Virtual reality-based learning
- Victim-focused workshops

He said that the Constabulary also provides wellbeing support for staff exposed to traumatic incidents.

Hate Crime

Question

How are victims of hate crime supported throughout investigations?

Answer

The Chief Constable explained that every hate crime investigation follows a structured approach, including:

- Risk assessment
- Victim needs assessment
- Safeguarding considerations
- Referrals to specialist support organisations

He said that dedicated hate crime leads exist across the organisation and partnerships with community organisations help provide additional support.

Question

Are improved hate crime outcomes increasing willingness to report?

Answer

The Chief Constable stated that it is difficult to measure definitively, but improved outcomes suggest greater victim confidence in reporting and supporting investigations through the criminal justice process.

Public Confidence

Question

What is the current position regarding public confidence in Cheshire Police?

Answer

The Chief Constable advised that public confidence remains strong and is reflected through positive survey results and inspection findings. The Commissioner noted that many questions regarding public confidence and neighbourhood policing had already been addressed during earlier discussion, particularly concerning PCSO recruitment and neighbourhood visibility.



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5. Any Other Business

None reported.

The Commissioner thanked the Chief Constable and the Constabulary for their openness and transparency throughout the session, thanked members of the public for attending and formally closed the meeting.