



Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

PUBLIC SCRUTINY BOARD

Notes of the Public Scrutiny Board held on 23 March 2026 at Runcorn Town Hall.

PRESENT: D Price, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
M Roberts, Chief Constable (CC)

Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner

D Taylor, Chief Executive

C Gilbody, Head of Scrutiny, Planning and Compliance

J Hare, Head of Communications and Engagement

A Murphy, Governance Officer

Cheshire Constabulary

P Woods, Head of Performance & Planning

Members of the public observed the meeting online.

1. Introductions

The Police and Crime Commissioner opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and members of the public, both present in the chamber and joining online. The Commissioner emphasised the importance of the Public Scrutiny Board as a mechanism for clarity, accountability, and reassurance to the public.

It was confirmed that neighbourhood policing would be the principal focus of the session, reflecting heightened public interest following recent changes to PCSO numbers. The Commissioner said he would be seeking reassurance and checking that the policing offer remains strong, accessible, and capable of responding to local concerns.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Public Scrutiny Board held on 26 February 2026 were approved. There were no outstanding actions.

3. Scrutiny Thematic – Neighbourhood Policing

The Commissioner invited the Chief Constable to provide an overview of current force performance *[see slide presentation in report pack]*.

The Chief Constable highlighted that, despite challenging national commentary on policing, Cheshire Constabulary continues to perform strongly across key Police and Crime Plan measures. He outlined improvements in call handling, with 95% of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds or less, and non-emergency calls averaging just over three minutes.

Emergency response times and attendance at priority incidents were reported as consistently exceeding national expectations and the Chief Constable reiterated that the force would not be moving to a grade one target threshold of 20-minutes, under discussion nationally, as emergency incidents are currently attended on average in 8 minutes in Cheshire.

Recorded crime continues to fall, marking the fifth consecutive year of reduction, and the force maintains the highest charge rate nationally. The Chief Constable noted continued improvements in outcomes for domestic abuse, sexual offences, stalking, and harassment. He added that the force is acutely aware that they are protecting vulnerable people, not numbers.

The Chief Constable highlighted reductions in recorded knife offences, the rarity of firearms offences, and work done by the force that the public does not see tackling county lines and organised crime. He added that neighbourhood crime such as burglary and vehicle crime is also down with almost a 6% reduction in the last year.

The introduction also addressed emerging risks to future performance, including significant financial savings requirements and increased demand linked to new national sentencing policies, which are expected to place additional pressure on public protection and offender management services. The Chief Constable advised that offenders moved from the prison service into the community will increase the demands on the force, and influence how neighbourhood teams are comprised.

4. Commissioner's Questions

The Commissioner scrutinised a series of themes drawn from the performance pack and public questions.

Slide 8 – Complaints

Question: Complaints have increased by 22%. What analysis have you undertaken to understand whether this reflects service pressures or in fact improved confidence in the reporting process?

Answer: The Chief Constable explained that complaints have risen steadily since mid-2025 but relate to a wide range of issues and locations, with no single theme identified. The increase appears largely linked to service-related issues, including crime updates and follow-up. The Chief Constable noted an increase in AI-generated complaints and reiterated that complaints data is regularly scrutinised, shared with local command teams and overseen by the OPCC and IOPC.

Question: How are you ensuring that making a complaint remains simple, accessible to everybody, including people with disabilities?

Answer: The Chief Constable outlined a range of accessible routes for making complaints including online, by telephone, in person, or via representatives and third parties. Published guidance and statutory compliance with national standards were confirmed.

Slide 10 – Use of Force

Question: To what extent does the rise in recorded use of force reflect better or more consistent recording rather than an actual increase in use of force being used?

Answer: The Chief Constable advised that the rise primarily reflects better and more consistent recording, including clearer guidance on lower-level physical interventions. Improved training, easier reporting and strengthened governance arrangements were outlined. The Chief Constable added that it should be remembered that if a number of officers are involved in arrest, all those involved are required to submit use of force reports, so one incident can generate multiple records. The importance of accurate recording to support scrutiny was emphasised, alongside reassurance that use of force remains proportionate and reviewed.

Slide 25 – Neighbourhood Policing

Question: What level of service can the public expect from the new neighbourhood policing model and specifically what should they expect from their named officer?

Answer: The Chief Constable clarified that the structure of neighbourhood teams is unchanged, but the workforce mix has shifted toward more warranted officers. Cheshire will continue to operate the 1-2-2 model, with named, contactable officers for each neighbourhood. A clear baseline of engagement activity was outlined, including regular surgeries or drop-in sessions, school visits, engagement with faith groups, parish councils, local councils, and neighbourhood watch, supported by rigorous monitoring.

Question: What steps are being taken to explain these changes clearly and maintain or even strengthen confidence across different communities?

Answer: The Chief Constable described a comprehensive engagement plan, including briefings by local policing unit Chief Inspectors, engagement with MPs, councils and partners, and a coordinated media and social media launch of the model. The Chief Constable welcomed the suggestion of publishing a standard information pack.

Question: What is being done to support morale, supervision, quality, and a positive culture within neighbourhood policing during this period of change?

Answer: The Chief Constable confirmed that changes were delivered without compulsory redundancies and that wellbeing support, leadership training, designated HR support, and structured engagement with staff continue. Beat management supervisors were involved in shaping the model, and further briefings and FAQs were scheduled.

The Commissioner welcomed the fact that any redundancies were voluntary and reiterated that this was done through engaging with the public about what could be achieved with extraordinary precept flexibility.

Question: How will you ensure that communities do not see or even feel a drop in visibility or reassurance, especially in locations where daily presence really matters?

Answer: The Chief Constable said that clear engagement standards and performance frameworks will provide measurable visibility benchmarks. He highlighted problem-solving approaches and targeted patrols as key mechanisms for sustaining visibility. He added that problem-solving teams are there to bring an evidence base,

understand what the drivers of crime are or the issues, and to put longer-term solutions in, often working in conjunction with partners.

Question: What safeguards are in place within the new model to protect neighbourhood capacity and to prevent those neighbourhood officers being routinely abstracted?

Answer: The Chief Constable advised that the force's local policy clearly defines what constitutes an abstraction from neighbourhood policing and provides consistent recording of both planned and spontaneous abstractions. He said that abstraction is governed by policy with a tolerance of less than 10% and that current levels remain significantly below this threshold.

Question: Can you explain why different neighbourhood policing models are in place nationally and what the rationale is for choosing the model that we are using here?

Answer: The Chief Constable explained that neighbourhood policing models vary nationally due to geography, funding, and operational context. He advised that Cheshire has traditionally adopted the 1-2-2 model with 9 Local Policing Units split over the three broad local authority areas, adding that this was best suited to local needs and aligned with government neighbourhood policing guarantees. The Chief Constable said that he wanted groups of officers who can understand their local community.

Question: What is the government expecting from forces in terms of neighbourhood policing, visibility, and community engagement - and how are those expectations shaping local decisions?

Answer: The Chief Constable reiterated that Cheshire had a strong neighbourhood footprint before the emphasis on neighbourhood policing from the current government. He added that the force's approach had been explicitly designed around the government's five pillars: police back on the beat, community-led policing, professional excellence, crackdown on anti-social behaviour, and safer town centres.

The Chief Constable and Commissioner both touched on the challenges presented by the sentencing guidelines and the need to protect communities from unintended consequences.

Question: Which neighbourhoods are contributing most to the fluctuations we have seen, and what targeted activity is underway to stabilise demand?

Answer: The Chief Constable advised that for the three main areas around which the force is structured, each has seen a reduction in line with the force level: in east of the county it is down by 6.7%, the north 4.1%, and the west 6.2%. He added that there were a range of factors which influence the comparisons at an LPU level for example large-scale events such as Creamfields, or serial or repeat offenders that can radically change things. The Chief Constable said that neighbourhood policing is the bedrock, but that it cannot exist and function effectively without broader force resources that are deployed against a neighbourhood problem.

The Commissioner reflected on the significance of the 18.8% reduction in neighbourhood crime in Runcorn and gave credit to the officers and staff for delivering that benefit to the public in Runcorn. The Commissioner also spoke about innovation in CCTV and his duty to find a solution in Warrington.

Slide 26 – Neighbourhood Policing Outcomes

Question: Is the increase in outcomes having a real and positive impact for victims of repeat offending?

Answer: The Chief Constable said that there are well-known statistics about the tendency for certain offenders to disproportionately commit harm by repeat offending. He added that HMIC, in their spotlight report on a series of causes of crime, cited evidence that homes are more likely to be burgled if they have been burgled or targeted before, and that in 20% of vehicle crime, victims have been victims before. He said it makes sense that if the force is tackling those people perpetrating the crimes, and a meaningful sanction can be secured, then that will restrict their offending behaviour.

The Commissioner reiterated the cost of re-offending and the Fresh Start scheme to try and get repeat offenders into employment and off a criminal lifestyle. The Chief Constable said that the option to give a quality intervention to offenders in the community is getting harder to do because the numbers are getting bigger and the force's resources are not increasing. He cited the increasing numbers of registered sex offenders that require supervision and action by warranted officers in the community.

Question: Do neighbourhood teams have the analytical support they need to operate proactively and identify emerging problems at an early stage?

Answer: The Chief Constable said that it was a careful balancing act which is worked through in the Force Management Statement every year to try and ensure that the force has the right capability in the right place. He said that investment had been made into power BI capability and data warehouses allowing optimised access to performance information. The Chief Constable added that this was referenced in the last HMIC inspection as one of the effective tools in protecting vulnerable people, which is the force's priority.

Question: How will you ensure investigative quality and timeliness continue to improve so that these positive trends are sustained?

Answer: The Chief Constable advised that for rates of Outcomes Brought to Justice (OBTJ), there is nothing that is changing that should undermine the improvements that have been made. He added that it should enhance OBTJ rates as the force's AIT teams develop their experience and expertise. He advised that what he was expecting is for crime to be reduced by problem-solving and effective beat management.

Slide 27 – Drug-Related Crime

Question: Does the 22% increase in drug offences correlate with any rise in serious violence or exploitation-related crime across the force area?

Answer: The Chief Constable confirmed there has been no corresponding rise in serious violence. He advised that the increase reflects proactive activity, including stop and search and parcel interception. He emphasised that a sustained focus on disrupting drug supply chains was a key preventative measure.

5. Any Other Business

None reported.

The Commissioner thanked the Chief Constable for answering the questions raised by the public through him and his office and thanked the public for joining. The meeting was brought to a close.

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