



Item 9
STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Chief Constable

Annual Governance Statement

2023/24

Foreword

Staffordshire Police has remained focused on continuous improvement over the last year, aligned to the ambitions set out in the forces policing plan which in turn is aligned to the Commissioner's Police and Crime plan.



During 2023/24 improvements have been implemented around strategic planning processes underpinned by an enhanced performance management approach and development of analysis and visualisation. Key programmes of change have been delivered to ensure that risk is effectively assessed when the public contact the force for assistance to deliver the most appropriate response and support, including directing callers to the right care from other agencies where appropriate. In addition, HMICFRS have validated the notable improvement in the overall performance in the force contact centre. The forces public protection capabilities have also seen significant investment and improvement as part of a 3 year change plan. Significant new policies and strategies have also been put in place to support the delivery of neighbourhood policing and to enhance the quality of investigations, apprehending suspects and focusing on victim's needs.

Building on the two external Assistant Chief Constables that joined the force last year, a Deputy Chief Constable appointment was made at the end of quarter three enhancing further the breadth of experience and knowledge across the Chief Officer Team. A culture of engaged leadership has been embedded and clear expectations across all ranks and roles set out.

The force has worked systemically and relentlessly to address the issues which have resulted in being in enhanced monitoring with HMICFRS since June 2022 which has seen formal discharge of one of the key concerns raised in relation to call handling during December 2023. The second cause for concern around quality of investigation was discharged during May 2024 along with the force returning to routine monitoring and exiting the engage status. The force remains committed to achieving its ambition to go on to be an outstanding force, recognising that there is still much to do over the coming period.

Staffordshire also has a key part to play to deliver the National Policing Vision for 2030 and to contribute to the ambition for policing to be more effective and more trusted.

This AGS therefore looks to offer a coherent and transparent review of the effectiveness of governance arrangements over the last year. This links closely with the force's annual management statement, internal and external review and scrutiny findings and force's ambition for the forthcoming year and beyond.

As Chief Constable, I am proud of the hard work undertaken by everyone across the force during the last year and recognise that this has resulted in significant improvements on which we will build for the year ahead and beyond.

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Chief Constable has an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that appropriateness of all actions can be demonstrated and mechanisms are in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Chief Constable is required to put in place proper arrangements for governance and risk management of the force's affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions.

The Chief Constable has adopted a governance framework, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government and Police' 2016. The framework outlines seven principles (as set out below) of good governance and aligns to the wider public sector Nolan principles of good governance:

1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law (integrity)
2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
5. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

The seven areas have been used to form the basis of the following review of the effectiveness of the force's governance arrangements.

A copy of the governance framework can be accessed via the force website www.staffordshire.police.uk

REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

The force has 3 statutory officers: The Chief Constable (CC), Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) and a Chief Finance Officer, Section 151 Officer (S151 of the Local Government Finance Act 1972).

- The Chief Constable is responsible for maintaining the King's Peace, and has direction and control over the force's officers and staff. The Chief Constable holds office under the Crown, but is appointed by the Staffordshire Commissioner (SC). This role is accountable to the law for the exercise of police powers, and to the SC for the delivery of efficient and effective policing, management of resources and expenditure by the police force. At all times the Chief Constable, along with officers and staff, are to remain operationally independent in executing their duties to the communities that they serve.
- The Deputy Chief Constable is a statutory post to act on behalf of the Chief Constable during any period of absence, thus ensuring there is a senior executive officer available at all times to exercise the post of Chief Constable.
- The Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) is appointed under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires every local authority to appoint a suitably qualified officer responsible for the proper administration of its affairs. The S151 Officer has statutory powers of intervention under S114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

A refreshed 2023 to 2025 policing plan clearly sets out the forces vision, values and areas of focus. Detailed delivery plans strive to create a safe and confident Staffordshire, secured by an outstanding local police service that is passionate about serving the public, caring for its people and working in partnership. Leaders from every area of the organisation have conducted face to face briefings to their teams to ensure clarity around understanding how each role contributes to achieving the forces ambitions.

Staff are very aware around the focus and importance of the standards expected of them as set out in the national Code of Ethics (refreshed during December 2023 and January 2024). The deeply shocking findings from reviews such as the Casey report (March 23) and the Angiolini Review (March 24) continue to erode public confidence in the service and remain to be a national focus. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published their findings of an inspection of Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny across the service (November 22) which saw a significant number of recommendations for all forces and other agencies to progress. These recommendations have been evaluated and the force is progressing any gaps and reporting progress (as are

all forces) to the national lead for this area of business for monitoring and reporting to the Home Office.

The Chief Constable has been very clear in setting a strong focus around standards, not only in relation to serious misconduct matters but also around other key priorities such as standards of uniform and care for force assets and being respectful to colleagues and communities. This has been driven further by the introduction of a PDR framework during April 23 which has seen standards related objective set for all employees. Each employee now undertakes an Annual Integrity Review (AIR) with their manager to provide adequate assurance to the force and the public that standards are being maintained and the force is aware of potential concerns.

Staff are appropriately trained to make ethical operational decisions within the framework of Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement (THRIVE). The National Decision Making Model (introduced across the service in 2013) which assists in making dynamic ethical decisions around a given situation or as a situation progresses. The force's Professional Standards Department (PSD) monitors standards and compliance and consists of three areas:

1. Professional Standards which primarily deals with complaints from the public, misconduct and Death or Serious Injury Incidents (DSI's).
2. Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) which deals with corruption threats and prevention in line with the annual strategic threat assessment and identified priorities.
3. Force Vetting Unit which operates in line with the vetting code of practice and APP.

PSD reports directly to the Deputy Chief Constable with Professional Standards and Force Vetting being co-located with Human Resources (HR) to provide a joined up approach to the management of people. ACU is located separately to maintain the integrity of any covert investigations. The department works across the force with all roles and ranks, actively engaging in order to highlight themes of concern, deliver interventions and reaffirm the values of the organisation.

The PSD's monthly People Intelligence Board process chaired by the DCC and attended by key stakeholders provides an opportunity to identify harm reduction strategies, to develop preventive or proactive methods to identify and investigate corrupt practice and review of ongoing cases.

The Professional Standards area of business runs a triage process to ensure the very earliest assessment, appropriate management and swift resolution for all dissatisfaction complaints.

The force has a whistleblowing policy which is supported by two confidential reporting lines; Bad Apple and the Police Integrity line run by Crimestoppers. The force has an effective, ongoing dialogue with the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) who also have a confidential hotline.

The ACU team has successfully identified and brought proceedings against officers and staff during 2022/23 where their behaviour has fallen below the standards that are expected of them. Counter-fraud arrangements are also periodically independently reviewed by the Ethics Review Panel (a sub group of the Ethics Transparency and Audit Panel).

The force uses the National Crime Agency (NCA) threat assessment, supported by regular regional threat assessments to focus the forces resources around the three key identified areas; information management; abuse of powers or police authority; and inappropriate associations. The force remains fully committed to tackling sexual misconduct, Abuse of Position for Sexual Purpose (APSP) and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG). PSD continues to use the 'Know the Line' Campaign training to improve knowledge and understanding of sexual misconduct and APSP. There has been a continued increase in reporting, in part due to confidence in the investigations undertaken. During 2023/24, twenty-one per cent of total ACU investigations were related to sexual misconduct.

The previous investments made to dedicated triage function provision for complaints, introduction of a prevent and intervention officer and increase in detectives to effectively manage complex investigations within both ACU and PSD, continue to support delivering the best service to the communities of Staffordshire. The relationship with the compliance manager for complaints remains strong and forms the basis of an organisational learning platform with relevant governance and ownership.

The force requires that all gifts and gratuities are recorded for transparency, even where declined. There is an online system for recording this activity. This is regularly reported to ETAP for transparency and scrutiny. Executive Officer expenses are available publicly and are also reviewed by ETAP. PSD and payroll undertake regular dip samples of expenses and other systems. Any agreed secondary employment is recorded and a process for authorisation of new business interests is in place. Gifts and gratuities and notifiable association portfolios now sit within ACU to provide an added layer of scrutiny and assurance on these areas of potential corruption.

The force's approach to misconduct cases is one of transparency. Regular updates are provided across the force from the Chief Constable via "news from the executive" to demonstrate the nature and outcomes of upheld misconduct cases.

The Force Vetting Unit operates in line with the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP). As part of the national response to the HMICFRS November 22 report, all forces have undertaken a historical data wash of staff to add additional rigour to processes already in place. On completion, no Staffordshire Police officer, staff or volunteer who went through the process has been referred for criminal or disciplinary action, management action or re-vetting. ETAP have regular development inputs from PSD which include vetting to aid oversight in this area.

Support around legal matters is provided to the Chief Constable through the Head of Legal Services. The Head of Legal Service's role is delivered through a contract with West Midlands Police and is a joint legal service between the two forces.

The force has direct links to the College of Policing and reviews all Authorised Professional Practice in the context of its own policies and procedures. All policies and procedures are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and are reviewed in the context of the Code of Ethics. New or significantly revised policies and procedures are signed off at Executive Officer level. There is a dedicated Policy Review and Development Team for the area of Public Protection which ensures that all local and national lessons learned and recommendations around serious case and safeguarding reviews for both adults and children are used to enhance service provision to those most vulnerable in our communities.

Staffordshire Police was inspected as a force around anti-corruption and vetting during November 22. The inspection report was published in June 2023 resulting in an adequate grading. The force remains committed to addressing a small number of areas for improvement set out in the report in line with the ongoing broader national work.

Following on from the force and national inspections and the publication of Baroness Casey's report around the standards and culture within the Metropolitan Police, the force continues to strengthen its approach to ensuring that officers, staff and volunteers work with the highest level of integrity at all times. The 'know the line' campaign supports this work along with a refreshed 'set the standards' campaign to underpin the role that officer and staff play in building trust and confidence with the communities served. Where standards do fall short, the effective mechanisms and processes within the PSD look to identify and deal appropriately with those individuals.

The force gives due regard to the Equality Act 2010 as part of the process of decision making by ensuring that the following three aims are fully considered:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it and;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

In addition to the above and on a more general theme, both internal and external audit arrangements give assurance or the opportunity to raise issues to ensure that laws, regulations, policy and expenditure are complied with lawfully, more detail around results is given later in the document. The force's approach to internal audit has moved from a focus on financial areas only to now include other business areas where issues have been identified, to provide an independent perspective on improvement activity.

2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The principles of the Code of Ethics are embedded across the force and are a key strand in training and policy development. The code was refreshed at the end of 2023 and now sets out three key policing principles (courage, respect and empathy, and public service) to help people in policing to do the right things, in the right way, for the right reasons. The force is using the revised code to ensure that the emphasis on standards is maintained for the year to come and beyond. Chief Constable makes clear expectations of standards of behaviour setting out clearly the message that staff and officers are here to serve the public by working in the public interest, fostering public trust and confidence, and taking pride in providing an excellent service.

Staffordshire Police publishes a number of key strategic documents in line with the force publication scheme, along with other information such as Executive Officer expenses and responses to inspection activity.

The public can report crime and incidents online and seek advice and guidance on the force website and other social media channels e.g. Facebook, Messenger and X (formerly Twitter), 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The move to online services and digital channels in line with the public's preference for more online interactions and greater digital services.

The force endeavours to respond to all Freedom of Information requests in the required time frame. This ensures that the public are able to access the information that the legislation entitles them to.

The force conducts specific consultation with victims of crime and wider members of the general public as part of a public perception survey. Results from September 2023 show improvements in a number of key areas compared to June 2022 including responding effectively to emergencies, feelings of safety, and supporting victims and witnesses and protecting children and vulnerable people.

Information is also shared from the Commissioner's Independent Scrutiny Panels (CISPs) around specific areas of use of police powers e.g. stop and search and use of force. All information is taken through appropriate governance to support learning and development to drive service delivery.

The policing plan has a specific focus on improving engagement with the service. The PEEL 2022 force report set out an area for improvement around driving improvements through an effective neighbourhood strategy. Following on from both peer review and close working with the College of Policing, the force has developed a brand new neighbourhood and engagement strategy which has been embedded throughout 23/24 alongside further investments in the Local Policing Model.

Problem solving has been a key focus for 2023/24 working closely with the College of Policing around what works and realising benefits for communities from adopting an effective and consistent approach supported by additional data and insight.

2022/ 23 Action 1: The force will enhance its engagement activity to develop greater insight and understanding around what matters to communities building this in to planning for the future.

2023/24 Action 1 Update: The force has a community engagement plan in place aligned to the overarching neighbourhood strategy. Community mapping has been undertaken across local policing teams to support each local engagement plan. Power BI supports local performance and governance. The forces problem solving approach supports local decision making with joined up effective partnership arrangements.

Status: COMPLETE

The force continues to work closely with communities through active citizenship, for example through Speed Watch, Neighbourhood Watch and Staffordshire Smart Alert.

The Police Support Volunteers scheme ensures continued opportunities for members of the public to be involved in policing their local communities. The force recognises the important contribution that is made by those who volunteer for example, as part of the Special Constabulary. The force Cadet programme also welcomes young people from across the force area to support their communities and develop their skills.

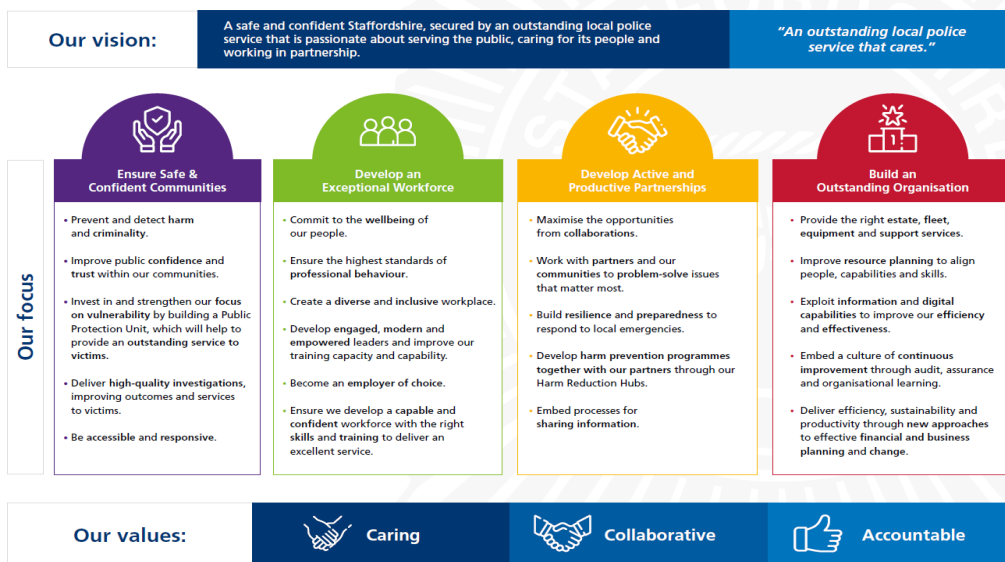
3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

The policing plan clearly sets out how the force's vision of being an outstanding local police service that cares. Key deliverables support the Commissioner's broader Police and Crime plan 2021–2024 which sets out priorities around; a flexible and responsive service, supporting victims and witnesses, preventing harm and protecting people, reducing offending and reoffending, and a more effective criminal justice system. The Chief Constable is held to account by the Staffordshire Commissioner against the delivery of the policing plan.

The policing plan has 4 delivery pillars as set out below. Each pillar is owned at chief officer level with a comprehensive and clear performance framework developed to measure and monitor delivery against intended outcomes for Staffordshire. During 2023/24 the force has significantly developed its performance management capability and capacity in line with HMICFRS' report 'Police Performance: Getting a Grip (July 2023). This has resulted in a connected performance framework, aligning activity to the policing plan, setting ambition and holding the organisation to account. This has been underpinned by the utilisation of power BI to develop real time performance dashboards and enhanced data visualisation. Performance against key measures are tracked at a monthly Performance Board chaired by the DCC supported by a wider Quarterly Performance Meeting where deep dive reviews are undertaken to ensure that performance, oversight and organisational direction is embedded

as part of key accountability structures. This has direct links with monthly operational tasking to track delivery against strategic areas of operational focus. On a daily basis a chief officer led pacesetter meeting is undertaken to review and support dynamic daily operational demand requirements.

Our Plan on a Page 2023-2025



A new Neighbourhood Policing Strategy was launched in October 2023 which sets out the forces approach to community engagement. Each Local Policing Team hold localised plans to identify and respond community needs and concerns. The force continues to utilise the support of its Independent Advisory Group around decision making and community issues.

In addition to the above, the force has also set out a new Data, Digital and Technology (DDAT) strategy with enhanced governance and leadership.

Underpinning the budget and MTFs process are the principles of setting a good and balanced budget. Whilst setting a balanced budget is a legal requirement, significant focus is spent on ensuring it is a 'good budget'.

The 2023/24 budget aligns financial resources to areas of greatest risk and therefore is fundamental to the performance management of Staffordshire Police and the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office

For 2023/24 the Staffordshire Commissioner raised the precept by 4.83%, equivalent to £1 per month for a band D property. Pay and inflationary pressures were higher in 2023/24 than forecast in the MTFs with the average pay award of 7% being announced. These significant inflationary pressures on both pay and prices have been captured in the 2024/25 MTFs, however they have necessitated difficult choices on both precept and also savings.

Outturn for 23/24 was an underspend of £0.147m. The budget for the year assumed use of the budget support reserve of £0.361m; due to underspends in force, this draw down was not required and further contributions were made to the reserve to support the MTFs

in future years. In this financial year, 98% of the £7.001m MTFS savings target has been delivered.

2023/24 saw the recruitment in full of the additional 60 police officers contained in the 2023/24 budget, establishing a baseline of 2,000 officers. There have been investments into Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras across Staffordshire, alongside investing in support services targeting victims of domestic abuse and creating a dedicated Offer Personal Safety Training facility.

Command leads are held to account for the delivery of services within their delegated budget. Finance Business Partners are aligned to command structures to give support and advice to management teams on the use of financial resource as well as to provide a link back to the force corporate centre.

ETAP generally, and its finance sub panel continues to closely monitor financial performance, reserves position and demands of the capital programme.

The government is committed to a Net Zero target for carbon emissions by 2050, and as a public body the force has a moral and legal responsibility to contribute. A two year sustainability strategy (September 2023 to September 2025) has been launched to set out a clear, ambitious, direction of travel for how Staffordshire Police will make its contribution. A number of key deliverables have taken place including the introduction of solar panels at police headquarters

Following the publication of the national partnership agreement, the force has launched phase 1 of its 'Right Care Right Person' in early 2024. This provides a framework to assist in decision making which looks to direct callers to the most appropriate response across wider partner agencies to ensure that those with mental health needs are directed to those services with the correct skills to offer the best support.

There is also a maintained focus around the local policing model to continue to enhance benefits of the around quicker response times, enhanced local knowledge and problem solving along with freeing up more time for officers to investigate crime to provide a high-quality service to victims.

Areas of operational focus are identified through a process of strategic risk assessment. Delivery and outcomes against these areas are overseen via a strategic tasking and monitoring process led at ACC level. These consider and reflect national priorities for example violence against women and girls.

During 2023/24 the force has developed a Corporate Development blue print to underpin current and future capacity requirements around functions including strategic planning, corporate governance, performance and insights and change management. External expert consultancy work has been undertaken specifically around the forces change programme and the capability and capacity required to deliver this at pace. A great deal of work has been undertaken in year to maximise business planning processes to best inform strategic decision making. This has seen a refreshed approach in consultation with HMICFRS to the

production of the Force Management Statement (FMS) to allow further detailed analysis linking across to financial and longer-term planning arrangements. Further work remains in train to deliver a restructured Corporate Development Department to direct work around efficiency, productivity and value for money to maximise benefits.

Action 2: Ongoing Action Full development of a Corporate Development Function will remain a key priority for 2023/24 building on the work to date. This will ensure maximum linkage across strategic planning cycle, delivery of change and development of comprehensive performance and benefits monitoring.

2023/24 Action 2 Update: A Corporate Development blueprint has been approved by the Executive Management Board. The blueprint has been created with consideration of best practice and peer support. Consultation around a detailed structure will commence in quarter 1 of 24/25 with implementation scheduled for Q3. The action will therefore be carried forward for continued monitoring of progress into the next AGS.

Status: ONGOING - CARRY FORWARD

4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

During the last year the force has continued to deliver against a phased approach of key change with ongoing work aligned to the Force Control Centre delivery of a Public Protection Unit. There has also been significant investment in enhancing the quality of investigations linking to delivering against the Code of Practice for Victims. These elements have a direct link to addressing the findings from the National Child Protection Inspection revisit findings (March 23), along with the accelerated causes of concern from HMICFRS. The force has built further still on the culture of better evidence based self-critical thinking which has supported better understanding of the current issues and focus on the evaluation of the impact of interventions. To support this approach the force has invested and further developed its own scrutiny and audit capability which has resulted in the undertaking of case file auditing in line with the HMCFRS methodology. These results have led to a comprehensive programme of activity including continued investment to support frontline supervisors and investigating officers to be as effective as possible which have delivered tangible improvements around quality investigations throughout the year, the impact of which is monitored and tracked through robust performance management arrangements.

The force has significantly enhanced its performance management approach in line with national recommendations set by HMICFRS (Getting a grip June 23) and delivered significant products to support the ability to visualise data to allow more detailed and sophisticated analysis and less manual production. The force's digital enabling programme has seen further developments around force contact and quality of investigation metrics, along with

the introduction of local policing, problem solving, HR and resourcing metrics which are used to evaluate and assess where further focus is required. The entire programme of work supports more effective management and analysis of information to inform decision making at all levels to deliver strategic ambitions within the policing plan via annual command level delivery plans and through individual contributions via personal development review.

The force's Performance Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable oversees how the force is delivering against its priorities aligned to the new policing plan delivery. During the year a Quarterly Performance Meeting has been introduced to drive deep dive thematic reviews which includes all contributions and holding local policing commanders to account. The Performance Board is intrinsically linked to a number of other boards including the time limited HMIICFRS Gold Board which as set up to specifically oversee progress and activity related to the accelerated causes of concern and the force's escalation in to engage monitoring. This board also monitors progress against wider force and national HMIICFRS recommendations and related internal evaluations and audits.

The force has a system of internal control which is a significant part of the governance framework designed to manage risk. Internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Staffordshire Police's policies, aims and objectives, including partnership and other joint working arrangements.

The force's internal performance monitoring and auditing have all indicated improvements during 23/24 in line with the intended impact of significant improvement and intervention activity. The results of the HMIICFRS casefile victim service assessment (February 24) as part of the broader PEEL inspection along evaluations through formalised HMIICFRS checkpoint meetings and Police Performance Oversight Group (led by the His Majesty's Chief Inspector and colleagues from national policing stakeholder groups) also support this whilst demonstrating that the force is now evaluating its progress in line with independent assessments.

Collaborative partnerships are successfully in place with other blue light services and local authorities to deliver around areas such as safeguarding, regional organised crime, counter terrorism, and motorways policing. Governance structures exist to oversee that these are providing value for money and these are subject to review via the Commissioners governance arrangements to hold the force to account for their part in effective delivery.

The force has established partnerships with academic establishments to commission work to help understand and develop best practice and culture. Investment has been made into the Staffordshire Centre for Data Analytics along with other partners to develop a 'big data' approach with Keele University. The force is also a member of the Open University Centre for Policing Research and Learning and is part of the Keele Policing Academic Collaboration (KPAC) as well as working with Staffordshire University to develop upstream solutions for early intervention which assist around safeguarding issues, victims experience and increase capability and capacity.

5. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

The Chief Constable sets the tone and culture of the force which is reinforced through an engaged leadership style which is role modelled by the Chief Officer Team through to frontline supervisors alike. The force has an area for improvement from the 2022 PEEL report in this area which the Chief has taken personal ownership of to lead and deliver against. The force has also invested in leadership growth especially around Sergeant numbers but also up to and including Chief Superintendent level.

In line with the policing plan there are clear plans in place around how the organisation will develop an exceptional workforce. A significant element of this is a focus on developing engaged, modern and empowered leaders. This has seen close working with the College of Policing to develop coaching and mentoring practices and development programmes for first line and middle line leaders, inspired leadership programme, CPD and network events along with tutoring and coaching and mentoring.

Additionally, a series of mid line pledge sessions has been delivered directly by the Chief Constable to build on the first line manager / Sergeant pledge sessions undertaken during the previous year, giving the opportunity to emphasise and discuss the importance of leadership in addressing the concerns raised by HMICFRS. The force reinstated a formalised performance development review (PDR) during April 2023 recognising that the previous check in approach was not able to adequately support the revised approach to develop an exceptional workforce. This formal review supports development opportunities, setting out and assessing accountability and identifying and managing talent.

The force has enhanced its approach to the assessment required for the FMS with a clear focus on understanding capacity to support the strategic planning cycle. Workforce planning is a critical part of this cycle with revised and enhanced governance set up in this area to ensure the force has the right people with the right skills in the right place now and in the future. Workforce Planning and recruitment/promotion activity is underpinned by the force's turnover timeline and promotion predictions products which detail forecast officer numbers against the Target Operating Model alongside future demand activity predictions and demand profiling. The force, in line with the national picture, still has a relatively young workforce with less experience than in previous years which has implications around capability and capacity in the shorter term.

The FMS and other prioritisation methods are being utilised to address gaps and respond to feedback from HMICFRS around managing demand and workload pressures to create more capacity to do a good job. This is a key intended benefit of the continued programme of change along with supporting supervisory roles to oversee and support more effectively as outlined above. The force has a comprehensive approach to wellbeing linking in with the national Oscar Kilo wellbeing approach. Occupational Health services are available to staff and proactive support is given to those staff in particularly challenging and difficult specialist roles. In addition, there are wellbeing tours set to cover the force's estate and an annual wellbeing survey is undertaken to understand themes and trends.

The force has developed its data visualisation ability to offer real-time data and information to assist with day to day management. Human resources information is now available in this format to assist with day to day and longer terms capability and capacity planning.

There is a clear scheme of delegation in place and the force continues to review and enhance governance arrangements where required.

Executive Officers at Assistant Chief Constable level and above must successfully complete a national standard of Strategic Command which has seen a new external appointment to the role of Deputy Chief Constable. This has come at a time where the force can optimise new expertise to continue to drive and sustain improvements. Business heads for HR, Finance and Legal services are all professionally trained and qualified as are other practitioners leading around analysis, change and governance.

Where appropriate, the force has standard operating procedures and information sharing agreements to enhance partnership working especially in order to identify vulnerability. The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub is a good example where together with other agencies, the force is jointly located and sharing information effectively to enhance capacity and capability. Partnerships with external providers have governance arrangements in place to ensure effective decision making and accountability and clarity of roles and responsibilities.

The continued delivery of the policing plan and enhancement and further embedding of the FMS have resulted in developing understanding around the forces capacity and capability for 2023/24. This has been enhanced further by the development of a strategic demand assessment product to support planning and prioritisation.

6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

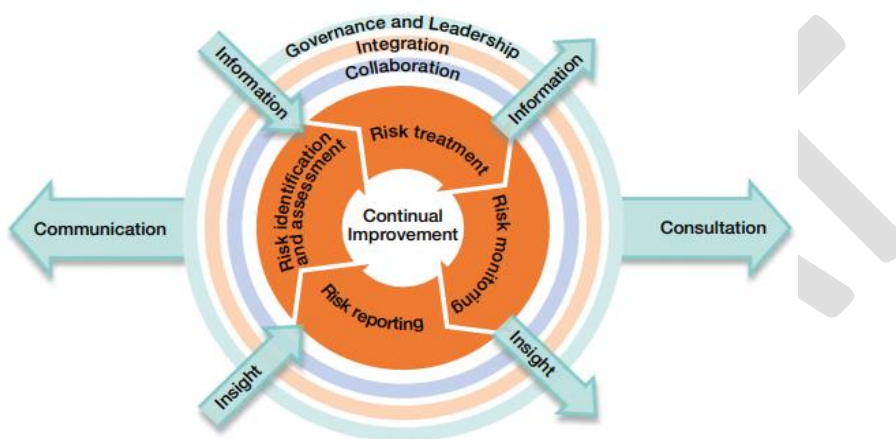
All key strategic decisions are made at the monthly Executive Management Board (see section 7 for more detail) which is chaired by the Chief Constable. There is also a weekly force Chief Officer Team Meeting where socialisation of issues and direction setting takes place. By exception, this meeting can also review matters requiring expedited decision making outside of the governance cycle, where this is necessary relevant key post holders must be present such as the section 151 officer and matters are reflected in the agenda and minutes of the next formal board for transparency and completeness. Command level Boards are held monthly which provide oversight and appropriate decision making at the appropriate threshold. Matters which exceed this threshold are escalated to the strategic level boards along with any matters by exception. During 2023/24, the force has enhanced decision making routes and refreshed the decision making framework to address some of the gaps and issues identified from previous governance review work. This is a continual process which sees terms of reference and key functions regularly reviewed.

The force holds a monthly Strategic Performance Board chaired by the DCC. Under the direction of this board, the force continues to report against the performance framework which underpins the policing plan which includes more real-time and self-serve data in line

with key priorities. The board also monitors against the national beating crime plan indicators. Governance around performance has been enhanced during 23/24 with the introduction of a Quarterly Performance Meeting (QPM) which involves all chief officers and a wider range of senior leaders and local commanders to monitor local delivery more closely along with appropriate scrutiny across the entire organisation to ensure it is aligned to force and local priorities and give the opportunity of performance area deep dives as required.

The force manages risk in a variety of ways to ensure that both operational and business risks are identified, controlled / mitigated and managed as appropriate and in accordance with force policy. During 2023/24 the force has undertaken a review of its risk management approach and enhanced the process and tools used in line with national recognised principles and framework (see diagram below). Close peer working and support from the NPCC National Risk Forum has also been part of the review. The revised approach has been subject to an internal audit review during quarter 4 resulting in substantial assurance being awarded.

Risk Management Framework (Source: The Orange Book-Management of Risk-Principles and Concepts 2023)



The following measures continue to be undertaken to ensure effectiveness in this area:

- Monthly Chief Constable chaired Executive Management Board with risk as a standing agenda item
- Individual risk registers for each command and department as well as specific registers for key projects / change programmes
- Regular internal audit reports around risk management
- The Section 151 Officer ensuring the propriety and legality of financial transactions
- Financial regulations and contract standing orders supported by appropriately qualified finance and procurement staff
- Professionally qualified staff and business area leads in all key areas across the organisation
- HR procedures supporting terms and conditions of employment for staff supported by qualified HR specialists
- Reporting mechanisms and trained staff reviewing and taking action to address Health and Safety risks

- Risks from complaints and internal conduct issues investigated by the PSD or the ACU and appropriate action taken
- External audit arrangements

How the force identifies and manages risk is monitored on a monthly basis by the PFCC at the Strategic Governance Board. ETAP also receive regular force updates and work closely with the force as required.

Along with the Performance Board, force performance and outcomes are scrutinised at a quarterly public performance meeting, chaired by the PFCC to hold the Chief Constable to account.

The force has recently reviewed its organisational learning arrangements and this will be a continued area of focus for 24/25 to understand lessons learnt both internally and nationally and ensure these are used to drive improvements and mitigate against potential operational and organisational risks.

There is a programme of force conducted internal reviews which cover a wide range of operational areas to ensure that the recommendations, especially from HMICFRS and Internal Audit are being progressed and service provision enhanced. There is an annual programme which for 23/24 has been predominately focused around the accelerated causes of concern and existing areas for improvement to monitor and track the effectiveness of interventions and improvement activity. This process has identified that although still more to do, that there have been notable improvements in year which have also been formally articulated to force via ongoing HMICFRS continuous assessment, checkpoint meetings and Police Performance Oversight Group conclusions. The force has developed local capability (maintaining the corporate standard and methodology) to enable larger samples to be drawn and reviewed on a continual basis.

Strategic level partnership meetings with Local Authorities, Health and other blue light services form part of the wider governance arrangements and set the direction for broader County and City-wide issues.

The Commissioner and Chief Constable work with colleagues and peers on a regional basis (the West Midlands region – Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands). The Commissioner chairs the Regional Governance Group and oversees with colleagues the performance of regional and national collaborations between police forces; these include the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU), the National Police Air Service (NPAS) and the regional Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU). Regional work is a key aspect of the overall force delivery arrangement and is one that is growing given Government investment into regional activity and the expectation that local forces will transfer some activity, where appropriate, into a regional collaboration. There is also a two force collaboration board between Staffordshire and West Midlands Police to oversee the Central Motorways Police Group (CMPG), Firearms Licencing Unit and Joint Legal Services chaired by the DCC with attendance by the Commissioner's Chief Executive Officer.

The Deputy Chief Constable is the named officer responsible for data quality. The force recognises that data quality has been an issue for some time and has invested in its crime validation capability to seek to address this. This has seen a significant improvement in the time it takes to record crime which is an outstanding area for improvement for the force from the PEEL 2022 report. The force seeks reassurance via its information assurance arrangements and Data Governance Board that data is being used and shared appropriately and in line with data protection and information assurance requirements. In the event of any potential data breaches, the force has a record of early self-referral to the Information Commissioners Office for independent review and to ensure openness and transparency. Implementation of the force’s information management strategy has been a key focus for 23/24 to add further rigour around systems and data assurance and digital capability developments.

The financial performance of the force and SCO is monitored through quarterly out-turn reports and refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Any variances or longer term gaps identified are reported to the Executive Management Board. Financial control arrangements allow implications on budgets and value for money to be understood and corrective plans put in place where appropriate to either maximise or minimise the financial impact. There has been a clear focus to ensure that budget information is developed to

A Good and Balanced Budget

A Balanced Budget means that:

- Income equals expenditure
- Cost reduction targets and investment proposals are credible and achievable, and;
- Key assumptions are 'stress tested'



A Good Budget means that:

- It has a medium term focus, supporting the Policing Plan
- Resources are focused on our priority outcomes
- It is not driven by short term fixes
- It demonstrates how we have listened to our communities through consultation
- It is transparent and well scrutinised
- It is integrated with the capital programme; and
- It maintains financial stability

inform at various levels of the organisation to support accountability in budget management and the demonstration of value for money decision making. The force set a balanced budget for 2023/24.

The organisation’s financial governance and management

arrangements are all based on the CIPFA Financial Management Code of Practice for the Police Service of England and Wales as presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 39A(5) of the Police Act 1996 and Section 17(6) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. This identifies the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Constable and the Chief Constable’s Chief Finance Officer separately from those of the Staffordshire Commissioner and the Commissioners Chief Finance Officer. The Code is based on a series of principles supported by specific standards and statements of practice which are considered necessary to provide a strong foundation to:

- Financially manage the short, medium and long term finances of the force;
- Manage financial resilience to meet foreseen demands on services; and
- Financially manage unexpected shocks in their financial circumstances.

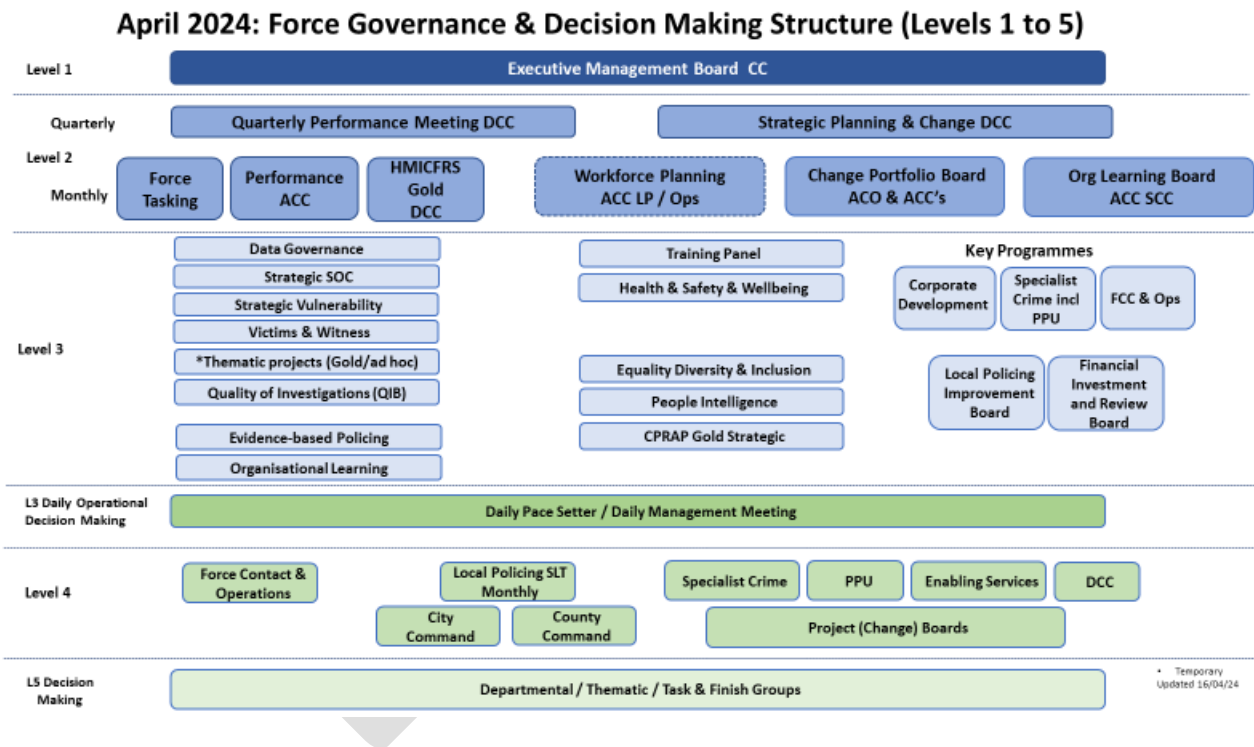
The force is aligned to the Home Office Financial Code of Management and the relevant CIPFA codes of practice. The FMCP is issued under section 17 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, which permits the Secretary of State to issue codes of practice to all Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Chief Constables. As set out in section 17(4) of the 2011 Act, PCCs and Chief Constables must have regard to this code in carrying out their functions.

In collaboration with the SCO the force reviews the Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation to ensure the organisation remains up to date with its strategic financial control environment. These are reviewed on an annual basis and approved via the Strategic Governance Board.

During 2023/24 the ETAP Police Finance Panel have closely monitored the force’s position which reports back into the full ETAP.

7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

In year adjustments have been made to the force’s governance structure which have included revision to workforce planning and the introduction of a Financial Investment and Review Board. The current position is given below:



Although the force has amended elements of governance structure in line with the action set for 23/24 there will be further emphasis and review of this area during 24/25. This will be in line with the assessment of progress around key HMICFRS progress to support a move from the governance of rapid improvement activity to a business as usual approach as the force has regained confidence in its performance, audit and accountability mechanisms. The policing plan will have a review and reset during 2024 to set ambitions up to 2025. The force will ensure appropriate opportunity to re-evaluate the above structure and associated processes to make sure the most effective arrangements are in place to govern the organisation.

Action 3 ongoing action : Further review of the force's governance structure and mechanisms will ensure clear alignment to the new policing plan in terms of monitoring, reporting and accountability.

2023/24 Action 3 Update: The force's governance structure has seen a number of enhancements during the year with the streamlining in some areas and the development of additional rigour in others in line with the forces operating principles. Although there will inevitably be continuous review and revisions going forward, this is seen as business as usual in response to any required adjustments to respond to local, regional or national requirements.

Status: COMPLETE

The Chief Constable is held to account formally by the Commissioner via a number of scrutiny meetings including the Strategic Governance Board and Public Quarterly Performance Meeting. In addition, monthly meetings take place which also include the DCC and Chief Executive of the SCO. To maintain an ongoing open dialogue there are also weekly less formal catch ups to discuss day to day business. Alongside this, the DCC meets regularly with the Chief Executive of the PFCC and the Chief Finance Officer also meets on a regular basis with the Director of Finance for the PFCC.

The force has a robust action planning system that tracks the implementation of external recommendations including internal audit and HMICFRS. This online tool is accessible to all managers across the force and is administered by the Governance Team. Reporting against status and progress has been via the HMICFRS Gold Board to hold those charged with delivery to account and to closely monitor progress and co-ordinate support where blocks and issues are reported. To support additional monitoring and scrutiny, a number of templates and tools have also been created and implemented to understand detailed delivery plans and how these link across the organisation.

ETAP regularly review progress made against external recommendations and this forms part of the Chief Constable's Governance report tabled bi annually.

The force has an embedded process for environmental scanning to ensure Chief Officers are kept informed of a broad range of national issues that may affect policing. The Chief Constable attends the quarterly National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) meeting to ensure a co-ordinated approach to policing beyond the force and the region. Any national changes or consultations from the NPCC are monitored and actioned via the daily scanning process over seen as part of a weekly Chief Officer Team meeting.

The role of internal audit is provided to the force via a contracted arrangement, for 2023/24 this has remained as RSM (UK Group LLP). The Head of Internal Audit ensures that there is a strategy and plan developed on the basis of risk with appropriate levels of involvement from the force and the SCO. For 2023/24 the audit opinions have shown a

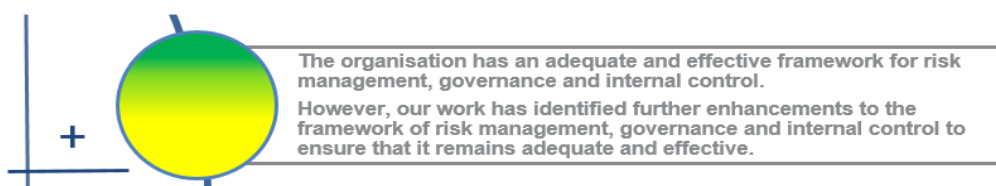
mixed picture. Seven audits of the control environment for the Chief Constable were undertaken that resulted in formal assurance opinions as follows:

- one report concluded that 'substantial' assurance could be taken (risk management)
- two reports concluded that 'good progress' had been made to implement previously agreed management actions (management tracking and fleet management);
- one report concluded that 'reasonable progress' had been made to implement previously agreed management actions (property store)
- one report concluded that 'reasonable' assurance could be taken (finance systems)
- one report concluded that 'partial' assurance could be taken (change management and delivery)
- one report concluded that 'little progress' had been made to implement previously agreed management actions (firearms storage and destruction)
- in addition, two advisory reports concluded 'significant weaknesses' (data integrity – offender management and business continuity management).

Significant investment has already been put into place to address the partial and limited progress assurance level areas along with the advisory areas of weakness. These have included revised and enhanced senior leadership and oversight. Specifically:

- Investment and growth have been built into the MTFS for the force's change management capability. This has been underpinned by an external consultant review and includes the reintroduction of a benefits realisation function as part of the overall Corporate Development redesign.
- The force has implemented a new suspect management strategy that has been reviewed as part of the ongoing PEEL inspection. Although the report will not be published until summer 2024, early indications show a significantly improved approach.
- A strict governance and record keeping process for the seizure / storage / disposal of firearms for evidential purposes has been implemented. This structure provides a record of movement which is further governed through an audit process.
- The force has created a detailed senior officer led action plan to review its BCM arrangements in full (this review was requested by the force as an advisory piece to support improvement activity already been identified internally as a gap).

Overall the Annual Internal Audit Report concludes that overall for the 12 months ended 31 March 2024, the Head of Internal Audit opinion for the Chief Constable for Staffordshire is as follows:



ETAP undertakes the statutory functions of an Audit Committee and operates in accordance with the Financial Management Code of Practice for the Police Service and CIPFA's Practical Guidelines for Local Authorities. A Sub-Group of ETAP (Finance Panel) provides a particular focus on financial issues.

ETAP continues to advise the Commissioner and the Chief Constable according to good governance principles, including the monitoring of the Strategic Risk Framework, recommending for approval the AGS and the Statement of Accounts as well as putting decisions made by both corporate sole under the spotlight.

Staffordshire Police's external auditors, Ernst and Young LLP, provide regular reports at ETAP. At these meetings panel members are given the opportunity to consider audit findings, challenge and ask for further clarification, and also make recommendations. The external audit of the draft statement of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 has not yet been started by the force's external auditor, EY LLP, due to a variety of complex factors contributing to audit delays in local government. This situation is allowed for by Regulation 10, paragraph (2a) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. (See attached link: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/234/regulation/10/made>). Therefore, this notification explains, as per paragraph (2a), that the force is not yet able to finalise the statement of accounts. Further information is awaited on nationally around the proposed planning schedule for 22/23. ETAP have formally raised this matter with EY and this remains an area of focus for the Finance panel and ETAP and has remained as a standing agenda item for each meeting.

In December 2023 HMICFRS discharged one of the force two causes of concern relating to improvements around identifying and assessing vulnerability at the first point of contact. Throughout 23/24 the force has undergone continuous assessment by the inspectorate as part of the all force PEEL inspection methodology along with regular checkpoint and PPOG meetings to support progress to exiting from the 'engage status' of monitoring that the force was escalated to in June 2022. All assessments to date, both internally and by HMICFRS have indicated good progress across the remaining cause of concern and areas that were identified from the last (2022) PEEL inspection. This has resulted in a number of Areas for Improvement (AFIs) being discharged as fully addressed with confidence around sustained improvement and the remaining cause for concern being discharged in May 2024, resulting in the force being removed from enhanced monitoring arrangements.

The force has taken learning and good practice from peers and the College of Policing in addressing the gaps it has faced over the last year and aspires to be a leading force for others seeking good practice approaches in a number of areas going forward. As described previously, the force had already identified challenges in these areas and was able to accelerate plans already in train to begin to address these which have now translated into measurable and independently verified improvement. The force has worked closely and collaboratively with HMICFRS over the previous year which has strengthened the forces understanding of good practice and has calibrated how the force undertakes its own assessments to match the rigour of the inspectorate. The force will receive its next overall PEEL inspection report during summer 2024 and is confident that there will be significant improvement to offer reassurance to all stakeholders

All remaining areas for improvement and residual elements of the accelerated causes of concern are monitored closely on a monthly basis via the HMICFRS Gold Board chaired by the DCC. The board is attended by representatives from the SCO and HMICFRS to allow openness and transparency around the forces own assessment of sustained delivery. A previous internal audit review was undertaken to assess the robustness of the governance in place to monitor, review and challenge force progress, this was awarded a substantial assurance level. The next phase of the change programme will continue to provide further opportunities for sustained delivery. The forces strategic planning process, utilising the latest information from the FMS, will ensure sound evidence-based plans are set for addressing future service delivery risks.

During March 2023 the for force underwent a NCPI inspection revisit to follow up and assess progress against the recommendations made from the 2021 report. The finalised report was published in August 2024. The report found that the force had delivered key improvements and made good progress to its services to children. The report acknowledges that more needs to be done around the quality of child protection investigations which has been developed as part of an overall force approach to quality investigations. The remaining areas for improvement are also monitored closely on a monthly basis via the HMICFRS Gold Board.

The force has continued throughout the year to work very closely with HMICFRS, The College of Policing, and other forces to identify good practice and undertake peer reviews and benchmarking. This is assisting, alongside the force's own planning arrangements, in providing long term solutions in line with the Chief's ambition to be an outstanding force.

OVERALL LEVEL OF ASSURANCE

In reflecting the overall position as outlined above, including internal and external assessments of effectiveness in a number of key areas, the Chief Constable offers a further improved and good level of assurance. There is still work to do to meet the collective ambition of returning to being an outstanding police service , however it is evident that the governance arrangements that have been implemented and enhanced during 2023/24 have demonstrated a significantly improved position. This has been underpinned by enhanced insight, oversight and grip in the appropriate stewardship of the use of resources by Staffordshire Police in order to serve the public interest and to adhere to legislation and policy, and ethical values and respect of the law. The force is also able to offer a strong level of assurance around the financial management of public money.

This improved opinion is given to offer a fair and balanced assessment of the response to the on-going challenges during 2023/24 and the positive impact and outcomes that have resulted.

Actions linked to the 2023/24 AGS to be progressed during 2024/25.

Action 1 carry forward : To fully develop a Corporate Development Function building on the work to date set out the in the approved corporate blue print. This will ensure maximum linkage across strategic planning cycle, delivery of change, and development of comprehensive performance and benefits monitoring to ensure force wide continuous improvement.

Action 2 NEW: To review the governance arrangements to ensure robust oversight and grip of external recommendations and continuous improvement activity following such time that the time limited HMICFRS Gold board concludes.

Action 3 NEW: To continue to seek and harness good and best practice from peers and key stakeholders whilst recognising the forces own areas of effective practice in supporting others across the service.

CONCLUSION

The detail given within this statement represents a transparent account of challenges and achievements identified during that last year. A vast amount of continuous improvement activity is planned for the year ahead including significant review and change programmes and investment in key areas. The force remains well positioned under the leadership of the new Chief Constable and Chief Officer Team to deliver against the ambitions for 24/25.

Signed:

Chris Noble
Chief Constable

Jon Roy
Deputy Chief Constable

John Bloomer
Chief Constable's
Section 151 Officer