

## **Commissioner's response to Staffordshire Police Public Performance Report**

### **(incorporating Specified Information Order Statement on national crime and policing measures)**

Staffordshire Commissioner Ben Adams' third police Public Performance Meeting took place on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022. This is the first public meeting since the publication of the latest HMICFRS PEEL (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy) report requiring Staffordshire Police to make improvements to services for the public of Staffordshire. It also provides the opportunity to share with the public the progress made since the last public meeting against the Commissioner's and the Chief Constable's vision for policing for the next three years. The Commissioner is keen that the key measures, revisited each meeting, will demonstrate the progress being made against delivering the service level ambitions in his Police & Crime Plan, in the Staffordshire Policing Plan as well as the national crime and policing measures (NCPM) in the government's Beating Crime Plan. Where appropriate, these are highlighted as local priorities or those that form national measures and the national digital crime performance pack (DCPP). This formal response to the performance report is designed to satisfy the statutory requirement to comment on Staffordshire's contribution to the national measures and be transparent about current progress against local priorities. The Commissioner understands that the national measures remain under consultation through regional groups and the NPCC and is satisfied that where appropriate Staffordshire Police have used local data to demonstrate their current position.

Commissioner Ben Adams acknowledged the concerns raised in the HMICFRS PEEL inspection last year and accepting the time lag until its recent publication, it remains that the public are still concerned about response times when they initially contact the force and, for the minority who find themselves involved in the Criminal Justice System, the timeliness and the fairness of that experience. Ben Adams is clear that there are some areas where Staffordshire need to make more rapid progress.

The recently published report rates Staffordshire Police as 'inadequate' in its ability to respond to the public, investigate crime and manage offenders and suspects. It further rates the force as requiring improvement in a number of other areas, while rating it as adequate in its ability to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. Within the report, HMICFRS makes a number of recommendations of what the force needs to do to improve its performance. In his response to the report, Chief Constable Chris Noble said: "I fully accept the findings of the HMICFRS' PEEL report and I am committed to addressing its recommendations. We are already well under way with these improvements, a fact recognised by the Inspectorate."

### **3. A Local and Responsive Service**

#### **3.1. Contact and Response: Emergency and Non-Emergency**

There has been a continued increase in demand over the last year, along with the normal Summer increases in demand exacerbated by extraordinary national events such as the Commonwealth Games and the death of Her Majesty the Queen, which have, in part, contributed to further frustration and delays in answering non-emergency calls and the associated increases in abandoned calls. Chief Constable Chris Noble has been proactive with communication to the public around the findings of the HMIC report, which highlights some enduring challenges on initial contact with the public and identifying vulnerability. The recruitment drives and technological solutions that were planned to improve current service levels by April 2022 onwards have not yet impacted on performance and the additional 30 staff who were recruited in June 2022 and fully trained by October will now be supplemented by further recruits. Flexibility of workforce is an issue as demand is less predictable post-Covid and the force confirmed that discussions are ongoing to find a solution to flexing resource at short notice, alongside the force's aspiration to get the Triage team managing more calls to reduce demand into the control centre. Triage continues to assist 101 demand but 999 Performance against target of 90% answered within 2 minutes is not now expected to improve until February or March 2023. BT 999 call data published on police.uk each month shows Staffordshire amongst the worst performing forces, which also evidences the need for progress required in this area. Commissioner Ben Adams also referred to the additional demand picked up by the police for dealing with non-crime occurrences, particularly mental health issues, which inevitably impacts on police performance. The Commissioner confirmed that progress of these plans will continue to be monitored at regular monthly performance meetings, the Public Performance Meeting and weekly meetings between the Chief and the Commissioner until performance is back amongst the best in the country.

### 3.2. Response: Grade 1 and Grade 2

The new local policing model moving from 3 response hubs to 10 hubs went live at the end of June 2022 and has seen local policing teams aligned with PCSOs and Specials and detectives (CID). Chris Noble noted that 20% more staff needed to be recruited to operate the new model at optimum levels, however this will see approximately 50% of the workforce having less than 2 years' service which creates challenges around experience. The force is not yet meeting the response targets it sets itself. This must change. Approximately 50% of emergency (Grade 1) incidents are responded to within 15 minutes with an average attendance time of 27.8 minutes.

As part of the new operating model change, Grade 3 calls for service have been discontinued and any other incident requiring attendance is classified as a Grade 2 which could be a response, a scheduled appointment or telephone or video appointment. Measures need to be developed for this category in order to manage expectations and maintain communication with the public. This is a priority for the Commissioner and will feature in all performance meetings until improvements are made.

### 3.3. Tackle Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour continues to reduce with a 30% reduction in incidents compared to the pre-Covid national baseline. Nevertheless, this is a priority for those who live, work and visit Staffordshire and will remain a priority for the force and for the PFCC and local authorities. Since the pandemic, there have been some changes in the types of ASB being reported and some changes to crime recording processes and offences types has meant that some ASB incidents will now be recorded as a crime of harassment. The force will continue to monitor these reductions and understand the causal factors. Local policing teams, working alongside community safety partnerships, will be key in maintaining these reductions and making Staffordshire a safer place and the Commissioner is committed to improving the consistent use of Community Triggers in hotspot areas where victims experience ASB multiple times. The intention in developing the use of Community Triggers is to control demand and demonstrate to victims that effective work is going on rather, than creating additional demand.

### 3.4. Reduce Neighbourhood Crime (NPCM)

Neighbourhood crime includes burglary residential, personal robbery, theft from and theft of vehicles, vehicle interference and theft from a person. Neighbourhood crime decreased 17% compared to a pre-Covid baseline set by the government. This has increased slightly from the snapshot at the last Public Performance Meeting but is still well below the national average reductions. Vehicle crime is currently seeing an increase, particularly in the south of the county, and the force is collaborating with neighbouring forces to ensure a joined-up approach and improved sharing of information. Deputy Commissioner Helen Fisher raised concerns over this increasing trend and how local authority partners have used locality deal funding to purchase 700 faraday pouches, signal blockers for prevention of keyless car theft. PCSOs have assisted locally to distribute. Vehicle crime is one of the few areas where Staffordshire is an outlier within our Most Similar Force comparisons and Chief Constable Chris Noble discussed some of the preventative measures the force is publicising to assist in crime prevention.

The government have mandated police attendance at all burglary crimes, which Staffordshire have done for several years now. The Commissioner will be watching this measure with interest to see if the reduction is maintained through changes to the force operating model and local policing structures.

### 3.5. Road Safety: Enforcement and Community Speed Watch

The latest figures for Killed or Seriously Injured continues to rise. The Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership continues to work on the fatal five risk factors and vulnerable road users. There are no particular patterns around age or causation, types of vehicles, locations or age. In the last 12 months there were 18 deaths in the age bracket 17-39 and 13 over 65, of which 6 involved medical episodes so perhaps there is some work that could be done about ensuring fitness to drive in our aging population.

Staffordshire Police fully engages in the national road safety calendar and collaborate with CMPG and West Midlands Police, which means road safety crime is borderless. Staffordshire Roads Policing Unit was being used to support response teams prior to the new operating model implementation and the reduction in motoring offences could be a direct result. The Commissioner is keen to revisit this measure of proactive road safety policing at future meetings.

The Deputy Commissioner commended the Chief Constable on the increase in community speedwatch groups and the fact that PCSOs have now had training in order to support groups. The Chief Constable also gave his thanks to the groups and noted that the challenge around policing is so complex that it cannot be left to the police alone. There is a key role for community members being involved in a structured way for prevention and detection such as neighbourhood watch, ruralwatch, farmwatch and community speedwatch.

#### **4. Prevent Harm and Protect People**

##### **4.1. Reduce Murder and other Homicide (NPCM)**

Murders have a devastating impact on the victim's families and the wider community. Murders across Staffordshire are predominantly committed by people who knew the victim. Staffordshire is not an outlier in national Homicide data from the national Digital Crime and Performance Pack, sitting 26<sup>th</sup> out of 42 forces for volume of homicides per million using the Homicide Index\*. Staffordshire has experienced a broad range of murders that range from domestic murder, child murder to drug/criminal dispute related murder. Alcohol, drug misuse and mental health are common factors in murder investigations. Many of these murders are the result of broader social issues and require a long-term holistic approach to breaking the generational cycle of violence. Staffordshire Police, together with the Office of Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner, local authorities, health trusts, education, Probation and the voluntary sector, have established a Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Violence Reduction Alliance to tackle the root causes of violence.

\*Homicide Index data includes contextual data and takes court outcome into account

##### **4.2. Reduce Serious Violence (NPCM): inc Domestic Abuse & Violence against Women & Girls**

Nationally this is measured through hospital admissions of under-25s for assault with a sharp object, and police recorded information of offences involving discharge of a firearm. A local measure for knife crime and gun crime is used at the Public Performance Meeting to show Staffordshire's position and this is used as a benchmark for future progress. Staffordshire is currently stable at 0.2% compared to the national beating crime plan baseline. Other Violence against the Person category has seen a significant increase over the last 12 months including increases in stalking, harassment, controlling and coercive behaviour, and malicious communications.

Chief Constable Chris Noble detailed some of the activity being undertaken regarding knife crime. Knife sweeps in parks, bleed kits and trauma capable staff in armed response vehicles and knife wands will be introduced in November to carry out stop and search in a safe and measured way. This is to send a message that you cannot carry a knife in a public place and not have consequences. November will see Staffordshire Police support a national week of action (Op Sceptre) around full balance of Prevention, Education and Enforcement around knife crime.

The Violence against Women & Girls (VAWG) metric has been updated in this report and both the Domestic Abuse and VAWG measure show an increasing trend. The force has recorded 24,491 crimes of violence against women and girls which is an increase of 24% (+4,809) against a benchmark 2018/2019. Domestic Abuse (crime and non-crime) has increased by 8%. Both the Chief and the Commissioner confidently attribute some of this trajectory to increased awareness of acceptable behaviour and victim confidence to report offences to Staffordshire Police. Victim referrals to support services have also increased over the last 12 months.

Serious violence\* includes Knife and Gun Crime, Personal and Business Robbery, Violence with Injury

#### 4.3. Disrupt Drugs Supply and County Lines (NPCM)

As discussed at the last Public Performance Meeting, Staffordshire had been identified as an outlier for low levels of recorded drugs crime within the national Digital Crime and Performance pack compared with the national baseline 2018/2019. The force undertook a data cleansing exercise and now this is completed, the force is no longer a national outlier. Commissioner Ben Adams relayed the public concern over seeing drug dealing on the street and the fact that drugs possession offence numbers are decreasing compared to the national beating crime plan baseline. Drugs offences are an indicator of proactive police activity and Chief Chris Noble advised that local Chief Inspectors will have a key responsibility around prevention and enforcement of drug behaviour in local areas in the new model.

#### 4.4. Tackle Cyber Crime (NCPM)

Action Fraud cases have gradually increased over the last 3 years, whereas investigations vary and have stabilised in the last 16 months. 13% of the 5,398 Action Fraud cases reported by Staffordshire residents are referred back to Staffordshire to conduct local investigations. Chris Noble acknowledged that it is an under reported area by individuals and businesses and certainly a growth area for the force.

Staffordshire contribute to 83 staff members within the ROCU, with a large chunk of time spent on investigating fraud and cyber-crime. The Commissioner and the Chief Constable agreed to bring more detail to the next meeting to discuss the nature of success levels in fraud and cybercrime with patterns, trends, key prevention advice and what police and partners can do to reduce crimes in this area.

### 5. Support Victims and Witnesses

#### 5.1. Victims' Code of Practice Compliance

The Commissioner was concerned at the last Public Performance Meeting that it was taking 27 days on average to connect victims with the support services. There has been significant improvement since the last meeting and the crime validation backlog has reduced to 800 cases from a peak in April of 7,000 cases, and is currently taking an average of 2 days. This means that 59% of victims are being referred to support providers within the 2-day target and the force has an action plan to increase and sustain this target including the introduction of a dedicated crime validation team. This is an area of continual focus and the Chief Constable committed not to let the service get back in to the position the force was in between April and August this year. The Commissioner was pleased to see the improvement and will continue to monitor this progress at performance meetings and update the public at the next public meeting.

#### 5.2. Improve Satisfaction among Victims and Witnesses, with focus on Victims of DA (NCPM)

The Commissioner was disappointed to see that satisfaction from the victim survey is not heading in the right direction. 63% of victims are satisfied after contact with the police. The Chief Constable observed that the survey results probably align with the findings from the HMICFRS inspection and there are explanations but no excuses so victims deserve to be satisfied with their contact with the service. The victim's experience is highlighted in the HMICFRS report and through activity to improve investigation quality it is hoped that although victims may not be satisfied with the outcome the force can still provide positive support through their experience. The force is working up a holistic Victim & Witness Strategy which will encompass all contact with victims and provide the basis for masterclasses for all officers to increase focus on the victim journey.

#### 5.3. Public Confidence

A wider survey of the public of Staffordshire has recently been commissioned to benchmark public opinion before the introduction of the new operating model. This data was discussed in the meeting and a commitment to deliver the survey again in early 2023 with more respondents in order to break down opinion by local policing team. An interesting finding highlights the disparity between the top public priorities of reassurance and ASB and the force's responsibility to prevent harm and protect people from high-harm incidents such as sexual abuse, terrorism and exploitation. Progress will be revisited at future meetings in order to really understand what the public think of their local police force.

The complaints dataset has progressed since the last meeting and there is now an appetite to understand the rolling 12-month trends in complaint themes and the organisational learning that has been identified and can be shared. The Commissioner is very keen that the public have confidence in how complaints are handled. Two members of customer service staff have been employed to deal with first stage complaints and may contribute to increased recording of initial complaints rather than a deterioration of standards leading to an increase in complaints.

The SCO deals with appeals of complaints where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the force's complaint process and the process is robust and only a handful have come to appeal.

There has been an increase in misconduct matters which may be attributed to the 'Know the Line' campaign the force is running and it is reassuring that these matters are being reported and dealt with appropriately. Staffordshire Fire Service have also adopted the Know the Line campaign which uses real-life case studies to demonstrate inappropriate behaviour.

The Commissioner is keen to look at this in more detail and also be reviewing the Independent Office for Police Conduct complaints data. These measures will be developed further during force performance meetings and shared with the public at the next public meeting.

## **6. Reduce Offending and Re-offending**

6.1. Outcomes – the Commissioner is particularly interested in managing expectations of the actual number of cases that make it through to prosecution and in Out of Court disposals, conditional discharges and community sentences and treatment orders designed to support people out of criminality and reduce repeat offending rates. This measure should be reviewed in more detail at future meetings.

## **7. A More Effective Criminal Justice System**

### **7.1. Criminal Justice – Timeliness**

The Commissioner acknowledged the terrible delays that victims and witnesses are experiencing due to court backlogs and barrister strikes. The key headline from the national Digital Data Dashboard is that Staffordshire is an outlier in timeliness from recorded offence to police charge for a victim-based crime. The average (median) time to investigate in Staffordshire has increased to (78 days) which is above the national average (45 days). The force is intent on developing clear investigation plans and increasing staff in the Public Protection Unit in order to boost capacity, with the aim of speeding up investigations. This measure will be reviewed on a regular basis in order to track progress in bringing this time to investigate closer to the national average. The additional context around most similar forces and national datasets aids understanding and provides additional reassurance of Staffordshire's current performance.

## **8. Enabling Services: HR & Finance Update**

### **8.1. Operation Uplift, Officer Recruitment**

The force reassured the Commissioner that Staffordshire is rated green and on target to meet the Uplift programme. In fact, Staffordshire has agreed to recruit over and above that target, which will mean that by the end of the year there will be 20 above target. There is additional financial cost of doing so but bringing new recruits in at the earliest opportunity is a good thing, however, the workforce may be relatively inexperienced. By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, 15% of officers will have less than 1-year service and 1 in 3 will have less than 3 years' service. Diversity gender split across the whole workforce is c.50:50 and relative to other forces Staffordshire is in a very good place with even gender splits. The same goes for ethnic diversity, which is improving although not yet at the same split as the population of Staffordshire.

## 8.2. Value for Money

This section is designed to demonstrate to people in this meeting that the business is being run at optimum value for money. One such decision is the recent firing range business case, which has undergone scrutiny before the final commitment. The challenge for policing is to keep specialist skills not just for Staffordshire but for national commitment and mutual aid. A huge investment of £15m is required to deliver a fit-for-purpose firing range to meet health and safety responsibilities and training requirements. Significant due diligence was carried out about sharing premises with other forces and the Commissioner is duly convinced that the right decision is the bespoke purpose-built firing range which will futureproof the force.

## 8.2. Finance

The public of Staffordshire are getting exceptional value for money in all areas including the core back office functions of the service. Staffordshire benchmarks 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest nationally across back office functions and in the middle of the pack for IT, so overall Staffordshire compares very well. This section of the meeting is designed to identify exceptions to the budget and capital spend as they arise and take the opportunity to talk about key investments and keep the public up to date with progress against savings plan which is millions of pounds over the term of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

No-one could have expected the inflation we are all facing. However, Staffordshire increased our budget in Nov/Dec last year to include gas and electric increases and are currently looking to meet those overspends in year. There will be an overspend of £1.2m but energy savings are being identified to assist and fixed contracts are currently in place for the next few years, so the short term looks good although there may be some inflationary pressures to play catch-up in the future.

The Commissioner thanked the Chief Officer team for the informed, educated and professional information provided to the public meeting and for the clear direction about where improvements need to be made. Good decisions were made last year in order to place Staffordshire in the best possible position to keep the resources to invest in the key job of keeping people safe. The Commissioner wishes the team the best of luck in achieving the rapid progress required to get back to being one of the most outstanding forces in the country.

Commissioner Ben Adams looks forward to seeing the progress the Chief Constable makes over the next period and exploring some areas in more detail at the next meeting.

The next Public Performance Meeting is January 26<sup>th</sup> 2023, 1pm at the Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford.