



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Chief Constable

Annual Governance Statement

2024/25

Foreword

Staffordshire Police has continued on its improvement journey over the last year, aligned to the ambitions set out in the forces 2023 to 2025 policing plan this in turn is aligned to the Commissioner's Police and Crime plan.

The force was returned to routine monitoring by HMICFRS in May 2024 following a PEEL inspection process which reported in September 2024; this showed a significantly improved position in terms of gradings and areas for improvement compared to the previous inspection undertaken in 2022 resulting in the force being one of the most improved nationally.



During the last year, there has been a continued governance focus around strategic planning processes, enhanced performance management and the development of analysis and visualisation. Key programmes of change are aligned to the force priorities and area of most significant risk. The force's public protection capabilities remain a key priority in terms of 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 vulnerability and victim's needs. A culture of engaged leadership remains embedded with clear expectations set out across all ranks and roles.

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.

The force remains committed to achieving its ambition to go on to be an outstanding force, recognising that there is still more to do over the coming period against a backdrop of significant financial challenge. This document therefore, sets out a review of the effectiveness of the force's governance arrangements for the financial year 2024 to 2025. This statement links closely with the force's annual management statement, internal and external review and scrutiny findings and the force's ambition for the forthcoming year and beyond through delivery of the 2025 to 2027 policing plan.

As Chief Constable, I remain proud of the hard work undertaken by everyone across the force during the last year and recognise that this has resulted in significant improvements. The force will continue drive improvements by identifying and understand the risks and challenges it faces going forward and ensuring that plans are in place to mitigate and manage these effectively.

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.

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.

The current policing plan (2023 to 2025) 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.

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. The 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. The force has addressed the national recommendations made by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

relating to vetting, misconduct and misogyny and will undergo further inspection and scrutiny activity around this area into the next financial year and beyond as part of a national programme of work.

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 PDR framework which sets a standards related objective for all employees. Each employee also 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) also supports dynamic ethical decision making around any 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.
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.

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. The 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 governance board chaired by the DCC and attended by key stakeholders provides an opportunity to identify harm reduction strategies, to develop preventive or proactive methods and 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 three confidential reporting lines; Bad Apple (internal only) and the Police Integrity line run by Crimestoppers (accessible to all police employees) and Police Anti-Corruption and Abuse Reporting Service (run by Crimestoppers but accessible externally). 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 2024/25 where their behaviour has fallen below the standards that are expected of them.

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.

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 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).

The forces assessment and risk identification process have forecasted an increase in demand and potential capacity issue for vetting arrangements which has seen this area of business undertake a forward-looking review in order to identify issues and gaps and ensure that mitigations are in place at an early stage. A comprehensive review of the Force Vetting Unit has identified several areas which require improvement. Through examination of best practice, HMICFRS inspections and most similar force comparison amendments to current practices are being implemented and progressed.

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.

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.

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, 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 forces 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

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 is 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 however in November 2024 the Information Commissioners Office made a number of practice recommendations in relation to the timeliness of responses to freedom of information requests. The force was required to implement and publish an action plan in response to the findings by the 31st January 2025. This was completed and at the time of publication the force had addressed the issues identified in relation to backlogs and timeliness compliance. The force has since taken measures to understand the root causes of the issues identified including commissioning a peer review and commencing profiling work to better understand workload against required resource. The utilisation of new technology will also be explored to ensure efficient and effective ways of working in this area.

The Force conducts specific consultation with victims of crime and wider members of the general public to gauge the direction of its Policing Plan commitment to being an outstanding force.

Victim of Crime Satisfaction results for March 2025 show improvements over the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months especially around 'opinions before & after contact', 'kept informed' & 'satisfied with overall investigation'.

Results from the force's Local Public Confidence survey (August 2024) show 6 areas have improved compared to Jun-22 including 'Confidence in Staffordshire police', 'being reliable', 'noting increased numbers of Police Officers or PCSOs', 'responding effectively to emergencies', 'treating people from different backgrounds equally' and 'being kept informed about what the police in local areas are doing'.

In addition, the Crime Survey England & Wales results for December 2024 show 6 areas have either improved or remained stable compared to Dec 2022 and the Force has performed particularly well for perceptions of 'respect' compared to the National average.

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 and the force has a clear community engagement strategy and bespoke community engagement plans for each local policing area. The PEEL 2024 force inspection report sets out that the force is good at preventing and deterring crime and anti-social behaviour and reducing vulnerability including the use of citizen contact records to track the impact of problem-solving activity and two-way engagement to address local, force and national priorities. Neighbourhood officers make good use of Power BI dashboards to understand where to target engagement based on trends in crime and antisocial behaviour, demographic information and other data. The force uses the 'Smart Alert' digital system to inform the public of policing issues, and to request information such as dash-cam or CCTV footage. Social media, and newsletters are used to inform stakeholders including MPs, councillors, and community members.

In September 2024 the force hosted a Staffordshire Police open day to support enhanced relationships and confidence across communities. This event saw around 10,000 visitors at police headquarters and officers and staff engaging with members of the community to show case the good work undertaken and the opportunities the service has to offer.

The force continues to work closely with communities through active citizenship, for example through Community Speed Watch, Neighbourhood Watch and Staffordshire Smart Alert and utilises the support of its Independent Advisory Group around decision making and community issues.

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 and Force Cadet Programme with an award category for each at the forces prestigious annual force awards ceremony.

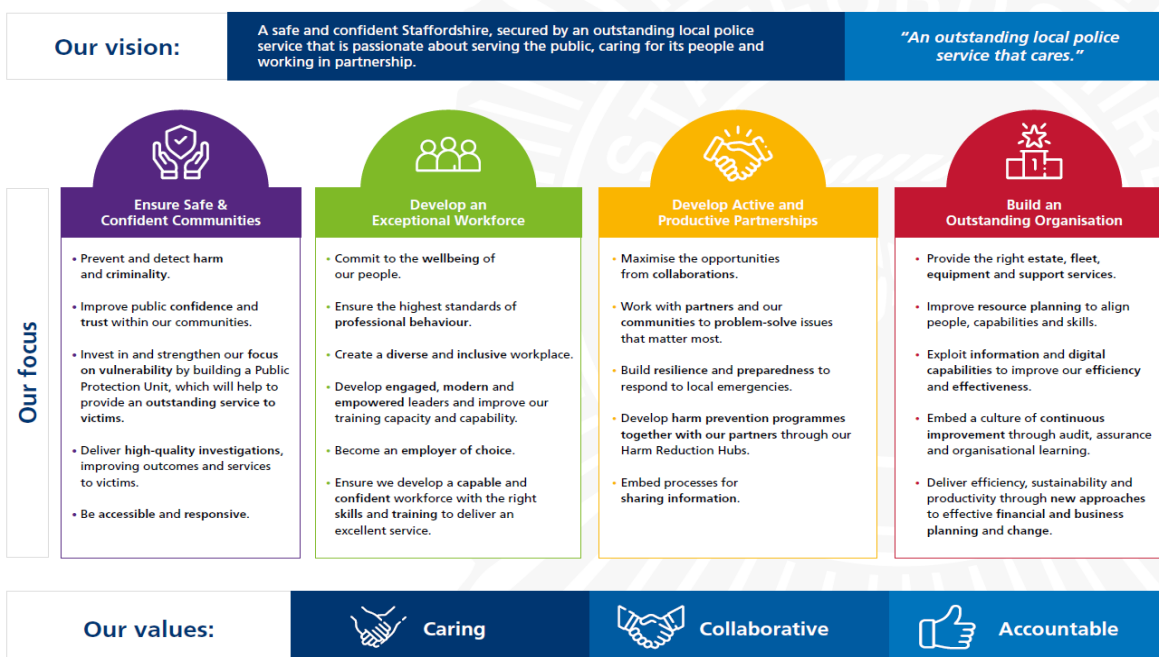
3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

The policing plan clearly sets out the force's vision of being an outstanding local police service that cares. Key deliverables support the Commissioner's broader Police and Crime plan 2024–2028 which sets out priorities around; providing an outstanding local police service, supporting victims, preventing harm and protecting people, and delivering impactful partnerships. The Chief Constable is held to account by the Staffordshire Commissioner against the delivery of the policing plan; this will be refreshed for 2025 to 2027 with a remaining focus around the connectivity the Police and Crime 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 2024/25 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](#)



In addition to the above, the force has also set out a new Data, Digital and Technology (DDAT) strategy with enhanced governance and new senior 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' and making the best use of resources is a focus within the Policing Plan and is considered under Pillar "Building an Outstanding Organisation".

The 2024/25 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 the 2024/25 financial year, the Staffordshire Commissioner decided to raise the precept by 4.99% or £13, which was below the maximum amount permissible before calling a local referendum. This was supported by public consultation with 62.1% of respondents

supporting an increase in local taxation to support increased running costs and invest in policing. The key investment areas are set out below:

- Digital, Data and Technology department resourcing and a refreshed capital programme to address technical debt as well as continuing to improve systems
- Additional resourcing capacity for the Corporate Change team to support the increasingly complex and challenging change programme, which is a prerequisite as part of the force's journey back to outstanding.
- Refreshed capital programme which contains a commitment to build a new firearms training facility, re-provision of the public order training facility, upgrades to both custody facilities to ensure safe detention and upgrades to operational police stations.

Despite the challenging economic environment, in 2024/25, the final outturn for the Group (Force and OPCFC) for the year was £264.663m against a budget for the year of £264.811m. This is an underspend of £0.147m.

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

The MTFS for 2025/26 has been set in a challenging financial environment. Various factors have placed pressure on force budgets and increased the savings requirement to balance the budget. The force is focussed on ensuring that it utilises resources well to demonstrate value for money with Priority Based Resourcing (PBR) being utilised across the force to enhance the approach to corporate planning and budget setting allowing the force to consider its service levels and ensure that investment is aligned to the priorities and risks of the force.

For 2025/26 the commissioner has taken the decision to increase the precept by £14 per annum (5.12%). This was the maximum increase permitted.

During this MTFS period the force plans to invest in a number of areas:

- Supporting the recruitment of additional Police Officers for 2025/26 & 2026/27;
- Electric vehicle infrastructure and sustainability schemes to meet unfunded obligations placed on policing by the government;
- Technology improvements to improve contact systems to better meet public expectation and improve public contact and feedback;
- Recruitment of transferees, bringing experience at pace into Staffordshire Police to complement existing recruitment of student officers;

- Automated document redaction software to ensure legislative compliance, freeing up time to be reinvested back into Policing;
- Dedicated proactive team to tackle important priorities in rural communities;
- New specialist Roads Crime Team to tackle crime committed on our roads.

The force has developed a detailed Efficiency Plan with key areas of focus for closing the budget gap in future years, this continues to be closely reviewed and monitored.

The force has undertaken an analysis of the 24/25 HMICFRS Value for Money Profiles published in March 2025. This highlights the following:

- Staffordshire has total net revenue expenditure per capita of £210.75 which is the 12th lowest of all forces.
- Staffordshire has the 4th lowest number of police officers per 1,000 population in the country (reduced from 5th lowest in 2023/24) and is the 2nd lowest in MSG.

Based on benchmarking and the forces organisational assessment (force management statement), it is anticipated that there are a number of areas that will require future investment and/or review, including:

- Information, Governance & Records Management
- Evidential Management Unit
- Vetting

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 and its finance sub panel closely monitor financial performance, reserves position and demands of the capital programme to provide independent scrutiny.

The government remains 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, alongside looking at the electric vehicle infrastructure across 9 sites to allow for some general-purpose vehicles to be purchased as electric with a view to growing the electric fleet offering in 2025/26 whilst watching closely the electric market against hydrogen and other fuel alternatives.

There is 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

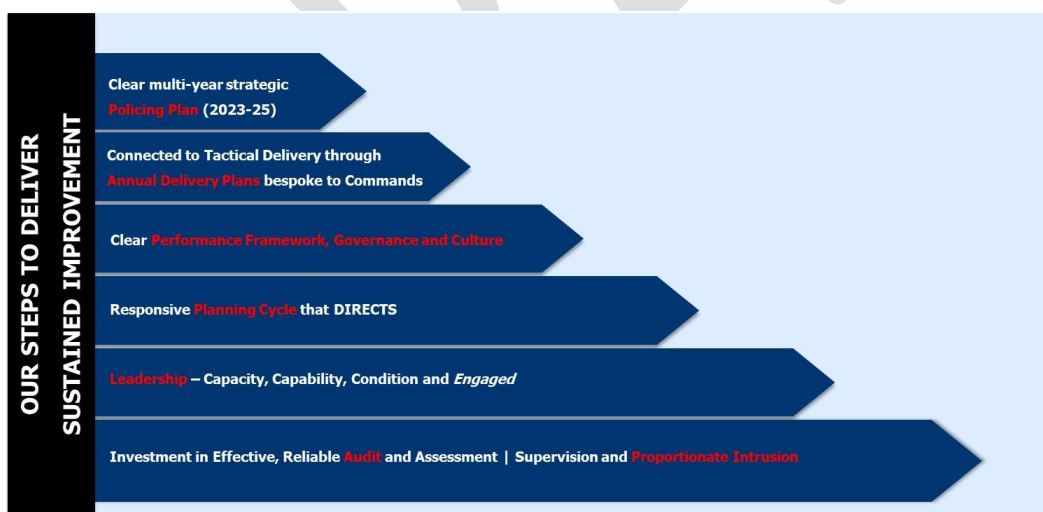
monitoring process led at ACC level. These consider and reflect national priorities for example violence against women and girls.

During 2024/25 work has continued 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 ongoing corporately to direct work around efficiency, productivity and value for money to maximise benefits.

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

During the last year the force has continued to deliver against key change programmes aligned to areas of significant risk and productivity / efficiency benefits. Key areas include Force Control Centre delivery, Public Protection Unit redesign, Local Policing operating model review, digital forensics, estates, and more recently a number of key enabling areas linked to innovation and improved productivity and efficiencies. These areas have direct links to addressing key gaps and issues identified internally and through external scrutiny arrangements and continue to support delivery against the policing plan objectives.

There is a clear focus on achieving and sustaining improvements from the strategic to tactical level. The below sets out the force's improvement approach in this respect.



Performance management arrangements allow the force to understand delivery against local and national performance measures to ensure early identification of issues and trends. Further investment has been made in the way the organisation is able to visualise data to support effective management and decision making. Year-end performance analysis has identified a significant number of areas of strength and improvement compared the previous 12 months, including responding to emergency calls, anti-social behaviour levels, supporting victims and victim satisfaction. Continued analysis has also identified areas which require

additional focus going forward. Improvement plans in these areas will be driven through the forces daily, weekly and monthly governance arrangements and appropriate performance monitoring.

The force's monthly Performance Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable oversees how the force is delivering against its priorities. Every quarter this meeting is extended to undertake deep dive reviews against specific policing plan priorities areas and / or emerging expectation areas, holding local policing commanders to account around service delivery and improvement. The Performance Board is intrinsically linked to a number of other boards including a newly created Inspection and Audit Governance Board which is also chaired by the DCC and oversees the progress of all external scrutiny recommendations and ongoing inspection frameworks.

The force now has an embedded 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 continues to invest in 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 resulting in tangible improvements around quality investigations throughout the year, the impact of which is monitored and tracked through robust performance management arrangements.

The force's internal performance monitoring and auditing have all indicated improvements during 24/25 in line with the results of HMCFRS casefile victim service assessment (February 24) and broader PEEL inspection activity during May 2024. The forces latest PEEL report published in September 2025 shows one of the most improved forces compared to previous gradings (see results below).

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Preventing crime	Police powers and public treatment	Responding to the public	
		Managing offenders	Investigating crime	
		Developing a positive workplace	Protecting vulnerable people	
		Leadership and force management		

The force recognises that there is still much work to do to build on this direction of travel and strives to improve across all areas not just where it remains requiring improvement. This work has been underpinned through the launch of 'Journey Back to Outstanding' to ensure that staff across the organisation are engaged to work together to learn and improve. Commencing in June 2024, Staffordshire Police ran the first of its 'Journey Back to Outstanding' workshops over a period of six weeks with more than 60 workshops and 2,500 officers and staff taking the opportunity to feedback on what will make Staffordshire Police

an outstanding organisation once again. These workshops were launched on the back of HMICFRS's decision to remove the force from its enhanced monitoring system, Engage, following significant and sustained improvement in key areas of the force's operations.

Feedback from those who attended the workshops was very positive, with more than 80% of respondents indicating that the quality of content and discussion in the workshops was good, and enabled attendees to contribute their thoughts and ideas. Staff continue to have a voice to support this journey through a number of internal communications options including the launch of the viva engage platform 'We are Staffordshire Police' allowing real-time two-way engagement. In addition, the force intends to launch a formal force suggestion scheme application during 2025/26 which will be docked into force governance arrangements to harness learning and promising ideas from practitioners and staff.

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.

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 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 increased 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 approach across the wider the Chief Officer Team through to frontline supervisors alike.

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.

During 2024/25 quarterly senior leadership forums have been put in place to bring all leaders together to have the opportunity to have two-way engagement with the Chief and other Chief Officers. These sessions are used to ensure leaders across the force hear first-hand key messages and have the opportunity to raise and discuss any matters relating to the direction of the force.

The force uses the formalised performance development review (PDR) process to underpin how it look 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. Governance and oversight around workforce planning is led by the Assistant Chief Officer for the force.

The FMS and other prioritisation methods are being utilised to identify gaps around managing demand and workload pressures to create more capacity to do a good job. The force has adopted a number of technological solutions to bring efficiencies to processes and will continue to apply focus around this area for the year ahead looking to artificial intelligence and process automation where appropriate.

The force ensures it has the capacity to be able to deploy to dynamic critical incidents. This was evidence during the summer of 2024, where as a force and wider service responded to the wide spread disturbances across the country and specifically within Staffordshire.

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 across the force estate and a 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 used 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.

There has been a significant amount of movement across the Chief Officer team towards the end of 2024/25. This has seen the appointment of a new Deputy Chief Constable in March 2024 (internally promoted from Assistant Chief Constable), the internal selection of a replacement ACC, who will now go on to undertake the College of Policing's National Executive Leaders Programme, and the appointment of an external ACC who will join the force in June 2025. The decisions made around the selection and appointment of the Chief Officer team have resulted in retaining a wealth of proven leadership experience and knowledge of the force whilst bringing in an external leadership perspective to complement and add strength and depth to the broader team. 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 2024/25. 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 this level in line with decision making thresholds. Matters which exceed this threshold are escalated to the strategic level boards along with any matters by exception. During 2024/25, 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. The board also monitors against the national beating

crime plan indicators and is working towards ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to support the performance framework required to monitor against the newly introduced Neighbourhood Guarantee. The force also holds 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.

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.

Risk is managed across the force 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. The force continues to review its risk management approach in line with national recognised principles and framework (see diagram below) to ensure that processes and tools are enhanced where possible, including the use of new technology and drawing learning from peers and from the NPCC National Risk Forum.

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 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.

Organisational learning has been 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 scrutiny 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. 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 and the public through Staffordshire Police's 2024 PEEL report. 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. The force has worked hard to ensure that it is as calibrated as possible with external methodologies such as the Victim Service Assessment (VSA) undertaken by HMICFRS as part of PEEL inspection. For 2025/26 a force led VSA 'max' will be undertaken which will see the review of some 1000 crimes to assess progress around areas such as quality of investigations, child protection and safeguarding. This process forms the bedrock for ensuring continuous service improvement in line with journey back to being an outstanding force.

Staffordshire's PFCC leads on ensuring that collaborative arrangements between the police and fire and rescue services support maximising efficiencies in terms of shared service opportunities (e.g. Corporate Communications, Human Resources and Finance) and shared estates.

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. Partnerships have strengthened over the course of 2024/25 ensuring improved delivery around areas such as child and adult protection.

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 such as the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) and the regional Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU). Regional work is a key aspect of the overall force delivery arrangements 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.

Regional arrangements are in place to ensure the oversight of services such as Firearms Licencing Unit and Joint Legal Services, delivered in collaboration with West Midlands Police.

In Oct 24 the force exited from the Central Motorways Police Group and formed its own Roads Crime Team. The formation of this 'in house' teams has ensured a strong offer around roads policing remains for the communities of Staffordshire.

The Deputy Chief Constable is the named officer responsible for data quality. 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. A review has been implemented which will run into 2025/26 to assess the capability and capacity of the force's information governance team to ensure the force identifies and addresses compliance and risk issues. The appointment of a Director of Digital, Data and Technology has strengthened the force approach in this area as well as bringing in a lead to drive technologically innovative practices.

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 2024/25.

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.

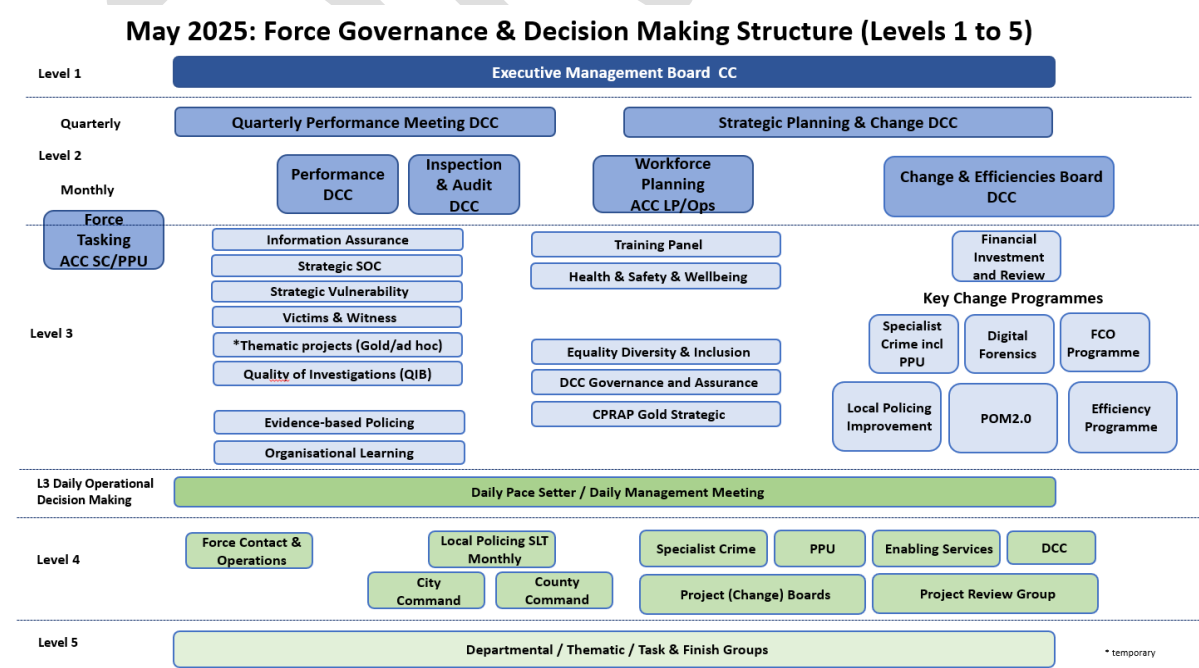
The force is aligned to the Home Office Financial Code of Management and the relevant CIPFA codes of practice. The FMCP is issued under section 17 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, which permits the Secretary of State to issue codes of practice to all Police and Crime Commissioners (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.

During 2024/25 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 revisions to the key programmes of change governance following completion and implementation of Corporate Development review. The force has undertaken a second comprehensive review of the local policing operating model to ensure the model is functioning to maximise around capability and capacity.

Additionally, the force has stood up an Inspection and Audit governance board to oversee all internal and external scrutiny. Also, in line with the clear focus on efficiency planning, governance around the force's change and efficiency programmes of work have aligned to ensure robust and comprehensive decision making to support meeting the financial challenge faced across the service. The current structure is set out below:



As the force launches its new policing plan for 2025 to 2027, further review work will be undertaken to ensure that governance arrangements support strategic to tactical delivery of the plan. 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.

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 and managed centrally. 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 and SCO via a contracted arrangement, for 2024/25 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 2024/25 the audit opinions have shown a mixed picture. Eight audits of the control environment for the Chief Constable were undertaken that resulted in formal assurance opinions as follows:

- two report concluded that 'substantial' assurance could be taken (Procurement & Complaints)
- two reports concluded that 'reasonable' assurance could be taken (Asset management & Key financial controls)
- one report concluded that 'partial' assurance could be taken (Vetting)
- one report concluded 'minimal' assurance (Evidential management unit)

- one report was advisory (Workforce planning – training and development)
- the follow up report (covering various actions from prior years) remains ongoing

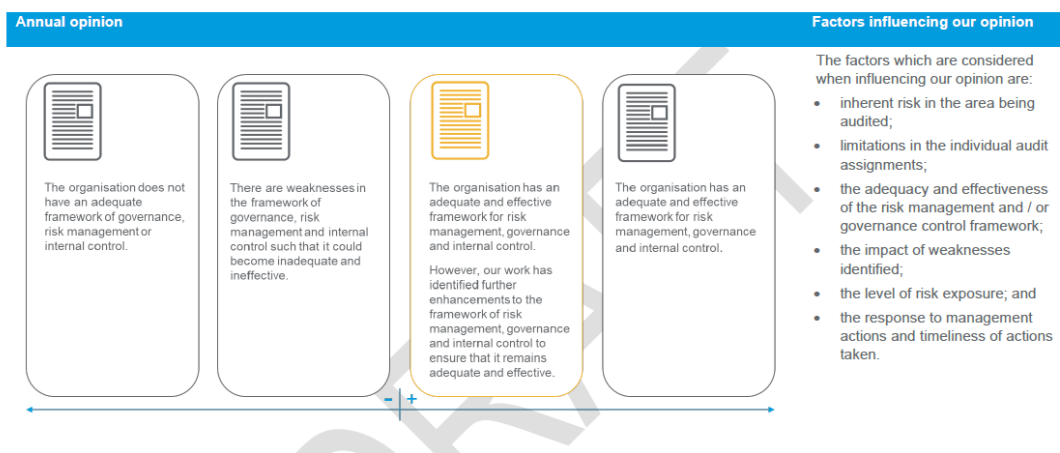
Significant focus is in place to address the partial and minimal assurance level areas - specifically:

- **Vetting:** The force acknowledged that a new system was being embedded at the time of review and that due diligence has been undertaken to review all cases where checks had not been fully recorded. The force review concluded that there was no residual risk in relation to this matter. Furthermore, additional assurance was given linked to the full historical data wash that has been undertaken by every force.
- **Evidential Management:** The Force accepts the findings as set out in the report, acknowledging that it has already addressed a number of the management actions since the audit activity was undertaken. In addition, a significant number of actions have been completed during quarter 4 of the 24/25 financial year. The timing of the fieldwork completed naturally exposed known gaps and actions that are being systematically worked through as part of the Force's five-year project plan.
- Additionally, work to address the management actions from the advisory audit around training and development has also resulted in significant progress, with a new strategy drafted for formal approval and relevant policies now in place. Work continues in other areas where technological solutions are being worked through.

As part of an enhanced response to audit finding, the force now ensures that for any reports tabled at ETAP with partial or minimal assurance, that the force's senior lead for that area is in attendance to provide context and assurance around plans to address issues identified.

Overall the Annual Internal Audit Report concludes that overall for the 12 months ended 31 March 2025, the Head of Internal Audit opinion for the Chief Constable for Staffordshire is as follows:

For the 12 months ending 31 March 2025 the DRAFT head of internal audit opinion for the Chief Constable of Staffordshire is:



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.

The Force and SCO external auditors, (Ernst and Young LLP) provide regular reports at ETAP's public meetings and meet as required in private. ETAP members, due to their independence, have the opportunity to consider the audit findings, to challenge and ask for further clarification where necessary and also to make recommendations on their findings. Azets have now been appointed as the Force and SCO external auditors and they have completed the 23/24 audit.

The accounts for the financial year 22/23 have now been published. The delay is due to the planned phased approach to delivering the 2022/23 audits in light of a variety of complex factors contributing to audit delays nationally in previous years. It is likely that nationally there will be an agreed narrative for accounts in this position but this is yet to be agreed.

The financial accounts for the year ending March 2024 have been published in draft form. It is unlikely however that these will be formally signed off by the new external auditors, Azets, due to the delay with EY LLP and the previous year's statements. A disclaimer has been added to the auditor's statements as they have still not received the appropriate assurance from the pension providers and they also cannot substantiate the opening balances until that assurance and information is received. Azets consider it will be 27/28 before the assurances can be obtained and the opening balance substantiated.

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. In May 2024 the remaining cause for concern (relating to quality of investigations) was discharged resulting in the force being removed from enhanced monitoring arrangements. This decision was underpinned by a full PEEL inspection which resulted in significantly reduced number of areas for improvement and an improved picture across the board. The force was confident around the progress that it has made and that this would be reflected in the inspectorate's findings. This has come in part from a real focus on knowing and understanding the business, taking learning and good practice from peers and the College of Policing in addressing known gaps. Other forces are now seeking to take good and promising practice from Staffordshire in a number of areas. The force has worked closely and collaboratively with HMICFRS over the previous year to continue to strengthen 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 is confident that there will be significant improvement again when it receives its next overall PEEL inspection report during summer 2026.

All remaining areas for improvement are monitored closely on a monthly basis via the Inspection and Audit Governance 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. 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.

The force has most recently had a HMICFRS Child Protection inspection, the findings from this will likely be reported during late summer of 2025. Again, the force is confident that this report will show a positive direction of travel and that the plans that are already in train will support where there is more to do.

The force has continued throughout the year to focus on providing long term sustainable solutions against its highest risks and key areas for improvement. This is the foundation on which the force will continue to build into 2025/26 and beyond 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 2024/25 have demonstrated a significantly and validated 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 2024/25 and the positive impact and outcomes that have been evident.

Actions and updates from the 2023/24 AGS

Action 1: To fully develop a Corporate Development Function building on the work to date set out 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

Update: The force launched its enhanced Corporate Development function in February 2025. This has seen a revised model for delivering change along with further investment in people, technology and data driven analysis. The corporate centre is crucial in driving continuous improvement across the organisation and tracking that this delivers.

Status: COMPLETE

Action 2: 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.

Update: Following the force returning to normal monitoring arrangements from HMICFRS, the time limited Gold Group was dissolved. The governance requirements around inspection and wider internal and external scrutiny were reviewed to ensure oversight and grip through a newly formed Inspection and Audit Governance Board chaired at DCC level. This board continues to provide direction and challenge in this space and will remain a key part of the force governance arrangements into 2025/26.

Status: COMPLETE

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

Update: This is now an embedded part of the force's service improvement culture that ensures that peer reviews, networking, and the sharing of good and promising practice are built into business as usual. The force has numerous examples of not only seeking support in this respect but also supporting others.

Status: COMPLETE

Actions set from the 2024/25 AGS

Action 1: To review the forces governance structures in line with the launch of the revised 2025 to 2027 policing plan. This review should look to create capacity within governance processes while ensuring robust accountability and effective decision making.

Action 2: To deliver increased productivity and efficiency through process improvements and increased use of innovative technology to ensure value for money and affordability.

CONCLUSION

The detail given within this statement represents a transparent account of challenges and achievements identified during that last year. The force remains well positioned under the leadership of the Chief Officer Team to deliver against the ambitions for 25/26.

Signed:

Chris Noble
Chief Constable

Becky Riggs
Deputy Chief Constable

John Bloomer
Chief Constable's
Section 151 Officer