



joint audit & risk committee

Building trust in policing and fire and rescue



Minutes of the Joint Audit and Risk Committee

Police & Crime Meeting

Date: 30 June 2026 @ 10am

Location: Fire Headquarters – Conference Room 1

Present:

JARC members	Officers
Chris Key(CK) Chair	Acting Chief Constable Becky Riggs (BR)
Bryon Preece (BP)	Deb Wilne - Force Governance, Planning and Policy Manager (DW)
Craig Brown (CB)	Jasraj Purewal - Force Head of Accounting (JP)
Emma Christmas (EC)	DCI Emily Clews – Professional Standards (ECI)
Gurpreet Singh (GS)	
	Louise Clayton – Chief Executive (LC)
	Dave Evans – Deputy Commissioner (DE)
	Kathryn Grattage – Governance Manager (KG)
	External Officers in attendance
	Daniel Harris – RSM (DH)
	Reshma Ravikumar – Azets (RR)
SCO - Staffordshire Commissioner's Office	
Force - Staffordshire Police - Force	
FARS - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services	

No members of the public were in attendance today.

Prior to the meeting today, JARC members held their pre-meeting

1. Declaration of interests, apologies, minutes and actions.

Declarations of Interest: None

Apologies: Emma Cranidge and John Bloomer - Force, Paul Grady – Azets, Ralph Butler - SCO

Minutes & Actions of the meeting on the 17th March 2026

AGREED - That the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th March 2026, are confirmed as an accurate and true record.

Actions:

- Action 3 from meeting 25 November 2025; for RSM to report back to JARC regarding custody-related data reconciliation remains ongoing, a wider options appraisal is being undertaken by RSM colleagues and will be reported to the Force in August 2026, with a further update to JARC in September 2026.
- Action 1 from 17 March 2026 has been completed; Structured audit arrangements now exist with weekly, monthly and quarterly checks. DH confirmed that the random spot checks remain deliberately unannounced and therefore no prescribed number is attached to these audits.
- Action 2 from 17 March 2026 is ongoing pending further Home Office announcements.

CK advised that as part of JARC's governance role, JARC had met privately with the Staffordshire Commissioner and further private meetings with Internal and External Audit are scheduled. These sessions form an important part of the Committee's assurance process.

2. Questions from members of the public

There were no questions submitted from members of the public for this meeting

3. Update from Chief Constable

BR provided an update on Force performance, inspection activity, workforce planning and financial pressures:

- The PEEL inspection had concluded with publication of the report expected shortly. A Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) focusing on child protection and familial abuse has also concluded.
- The Force was required to identify £21million of savings over the next four years, having already delivered savings of £9million during 2025.26. BR added special thanks to all the teams working through this and to the SCO for the support around precept.
- Officer numbers were projected to reach 2,100 by the year end, this is a significant investment and will be the highest number of officers since 2011. A further 15 staff have been recruited into the Contact Centre, increasing staffing to 202 posts.
- Investment continued in Guardian digital forensics, Axon body worn video technology and automation opportunities. Through CCTV registry the Force has strengthened collaboration with retail and businesses to enable them to upload CCTV to a platform to speed up investigations.
- Priority has been focusing on responsive service, and 999 call performance had significantly improved with calls routinely answered within national standards, the Force also wants to see consistency around this.
- Positive outcomes have continued around road crime, burglary reduction and hotspot policing.

CK thanked BR for the update and recognised the significant improvements made, particularly around the 999 call performance.

Q: CK asked for assurance regarding future technology investments given the uncertainty surrounding Police Reform and Local Government Reform.

A: BR advised the Medium-Term Financial Strategy supports future investment decisions, including custody provision. Whilst uncertainty remains, strategic planning is taking place at local, regional and national levels and discussions continue with the Commissioner.

Q: CK asked regarding emerging risks, particularly around Cyber security, is the Force comfortable around the risk and its resilience?

A: BR advised the Force currently meets national requirements and continues to invest in enhanced cyber resilience. Further details have been provided separately to the Commissioner and Chief Executive.

Q: CB asked whether the £9million savings achieved represented recurring savings and questioned confidence in achieving the remaining £21million savings target.

A: BR acknowledged future savings would become increasingly difficult following the delivery of many early efficiencies. Robust governance arrangements and efficiency panels remain in place, and redundancy programmes have been avoided to date.

LC advised the SCO had also delivered 100% of planned savings and was reviewing reserves and future budget requirements in light of governance reform proposals.

DE added that significant uncertainty remains around future funding arrangements for public services and the assumptions underpinning the reform programmes.

Q: CK sought assurance regarding Public Protection arrangements and increasing demand.

A: BR advised that Public Protection encompasses child protection, exploitation, vulnerable adults, domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. Inspection findings remained positive, partnership arrangements were strong and the increasing reporting levels reflected improved public confidence.

Q: EC queried the balance between officer recruitment and workforce experience, and asked if the Force is attractive to applications and transfers in?

A: BR advised the Force continues to recruit both new officers and experienced transferees, particularly within specialist areas such as firearms, child protection and sexual offences investigation. Leadership recruitment activity has also attracted interest from other forces.

CK thanked BR for the comprehensive update and the informative discussion.

4. RSM Internal Auditors

i. Annual Report and Audit Opinion

DH presented the Annual Report and advised Reasonable Assurance opinions had been issued for both the Commissioner and Chief Constable:

- Positive assurance had been provided on governance, risk management and control arrangements.
- Previous negative audit findings had shown improvement.
- Positive engagement and audit culture had been evident throughout the year.

- No significant governance issues requiring inclusion within the Annual Governance Statement had been identified.

Q: GS queried how Internal Audit assesses organisational culture?

A: DH advised that assessment is based on ongoing engagement, responsiveness, audit planning discussions and interactions throughout the audit year.

Q: CK asked whether information requests had generally been received promptly?

A: DH advised information had largely been received in a timely manner and no significant concerns had arisen.

Q: CK queried how reasonable assurance had been maintained where a high-priority action remained open within the Southern Area Custody Facilities audit?

A: DH explained the action related specifically to data reconciliation. An updated position would be reported back once further review work had been completed.

DW advised there had been considerable due diligence around the issue and welcomed the further work planned.

ii. Progress Paper

DH advised:

- The PPU Benefits Realisation review represented the final audit report from the 2025.26 plan.
- One audit is currently in progress.
- Two further audits will commence during July with reports expected for September JARC.

iii. PPU Investment Benefit Realisation

DH presented the report which was an advisory review:

- Whilst aspects of programme delivery had been well documented, weaknesses were identified around business cases, project governance and benefits realisation.
- No formal project management framework existed when the programme commenced.
- Benefits were not consistently defined or tracked.
- Lessons learned should be applied to future projects and programmes.

Q: GS sought clarification regarding tracking expected benefits if the benefits have not been clearly defined?

A: DH explained there was inconsistency between business cases, benefits registers and post-implementation reporting, and the lesson to take was that without the framework it was difficult to measure consistency.

EC added that there was disappointment that project management weaknesses continued to feature within audit findings and emphasised the need for standardised governance documentation covering objectives, resources, governance arrangements, timescales, benefits and exit arrangements.

DW advised the findings reflected historic arrangements. A Head of Strategic Change had since been appointed and revised project governance and benefits management arrangements were now in place.

Q: CK added that the findings had impacted JARC's confidence regarding the management of major projects and asked for assurance that the review was not indicative of wider organisational weaknesses.

A: DW and LC advised significant progress had been made over the past year and provided assurance that the new governance arrangements are substantially stronger than those which were reviewed in the audit. There is now a specific Strategic Governance Board that reviews Transformation and Change.

EC welcomed the improvements and suggested that future audits should test compliance with the revised framework.

DH agreed this could be explored through a future follow-up review.

LC advised the Commissioner now receives regular assurance updates regarding strategic change activity and major projects, and meets bimonthly with the Head of Change. In particular with the Southern Area Custody Work and the Commissioner has requested that the business case and the options appraisal are presented along with the timeline because of the transitional governance arrangements. It has been confirmed that two members of the SCO team, with experience in Project management will sit on the working groups, to provide the Commissioner with assurance around this programme.

Q: CB sought confirmation as to the rationale for bringing in PWC as consultants on a previous project?

A: DW advised that this was some time ago and believed it to be around the level of capability and capacity within the team at the time.

LC added that this was probably back in 2022 and John Bloomer may have been able to answer this question, but that it was probably the Chief Constable who made that decision at the time.

ACTION 1: RSM to consider a future review activity relating to project governance once revised arrangements have matured.

iv. RSM Emerging Risk Radar Spring 2026

DH presented the Emerging Risk Radar and outlined key themes arising nationally. It was confirmed that both organisations receive the report and have the opportunity to check and challenge across their own risk registers.

DW added that the document provided useful horizon scanning and aligned closely with both Force and national policing risks.

v. RSM UK EQA June 2026

DH outlined the arrangements associated with the Global Internal Audit Standards and external quality assessment requirements, confirming that the standards are being met by the approach that RSM has taken. This is reviewed every five years and expires in December, so the review of this will commence in October.

Q: CK queried the governance arrangements surrounding the Chief Audit Executive role and oversight by audit committees, and asked if this could be discussed further at the JARC and Internal Audit annual meeting on 2 July 2026?

A: DH provided assurance that proposed arrangements remained compliant with the new standards and would be discussed further during the annual meeting.

5. External Auditors AZETS

i. Draft Annual Plan

RR presented the Draft Annual Audit Plan.

RR advised:

- The audit approach remains broadly consistent with previous years.
- Audit planning work has commenced earlier than originally anticipated.
- Significant risks remain largely unchanged.
- The backstop date of 31 January 2027 is expected to be achieved.

Q: CK welcomed the earlier commencement of audit work and questioned whether any issues existed that may affect delivery?

A: RR advised no issues had been identified that would prevent achieving the statutory deadline.

Q: CK asked about the references to management override of controls, and the governance behind this.

A: RR advised this remains an inherent audit risk for all organisations and is therefore subject to detailed testing.

Q: CB queried that several of the fee estimates are showing as "to be confirmed".

A: RR advised that the final fees would depend on the actual audit activity undertaken. The fees are in line with the PSAA and set for 2025.26 but there may be unknown factors that come through.

6. Risk

i. Force Risk Management Update

DW presented the strategic risk update:

- Nine strategic risks are currently recorded.
- Since November three new risks relating to Public Confidence, Officer Strength and Police System Reform have been added.
- Risks concerning Vetting, Information Governance and Police Pensions have reduced and been de-escalated.
- All strategic risks are reviewed through the Executive Management Board, and although there is a level of stability with the Risk Register this does not mean that there is not continued work ongoing in the background.

Q: CK queried how escalation and de-escalation decisions are made in relation to the risk register?

A: DW confirmed that no risks are added or removed from the register without review and agreement through the Executive Management Board. Detailed evidence and supporting documentation exist for every risk, and there is a very clear structure around the process.

Q: EC queried whether issues continue to be maintained separately from risks?

A: DW confirmed the approach had been simplified and now focuses on risk management.

EC suggested the committee receives limited assurance through public reports alone and requested more detail regarding management activity and mitigations, and if this could be done in a closed session at alternate meetings.

CK agreed that additional context would assist JARC in understanding risk movement and governance discussions.

ACTION 2: Detailed Force and SCO risk discussions to be scheduled within alternate closed JARC sessions.

ii. SCO Risk Management Update

LC advised:

- The SCO Risk Management Policy has recently been updated.
- Risk reporting now aligns more closely with Force arrangements.
- Separate Strategic and Official Sensitive risk registers are maintained.

LC advised more detailed information could be shared within future closed sessions.

7. Governance

i. SCO Draft AGS including Audit Opinion – Verbal Update

LC advised the SCO AGS was due for publication on 30 June 2026 following inclusion of the Internal Audit Opinion and final finance comments.

CK confirmed any feedback could be provided following circulation.

ii. Force Draft AGS, Including Audit Opinion – Verbal Update

DW apologised for the late sharing of the Force AGS due to competing inspection priorities.

DW advised key themes included:

- Police Reform and Local Government Reform.
- Leadership and cultural developments.
- Change management and governance improvements.
- Performance and inspection outcomes.
- Areas continuing to require improvement.

ACTION 3: Final versions of both AGS documents to be circulated to JARC members.

8. Ethics

i. Force Gifts and Hospitality Report

ECI presented the report and advised additional detail had been included following previous JARC feedback and explained:

- Reporting levels have significantly increased, providing improved assurance.
- A new electronic system is being developed to improve recording and supervision.
- Dip sampling and integrity checks continue to take place.
- Reflective practice has been undertaken where minor policy issues were identified.

Q: CB queried the current submission process?

A: ECI advised the existing database is limited and the proposed replacement will provide a more user-friendly system with improved controls.

Q: EC asked when the new system is expected to be implemented?

A: ECI advised implementation is currently targeted for Quarter 3.

Q: GS sought assurance around the governance and system design?

A: ECI advised Digital Services are supporting the development and controls have been built into the design process.

Q: CK asked how staff awareness of policy requirements is maintained.

A: ECI advised policy requirements are regularly communicated through internal media, integrity updates, PSD communications and local engagement activity.

ii. SCO Gifts and Hospitality Report

LC advised that following a previous request from JARC the policy was refreshed which included a table to provide estimated values. These have been included wherever possible within the report. It was also confirmed a new electronic system would not be pursued given the anticipated governance changes to the SCO in May 2028.

9. Finance Papers

i. Force DRAFT Statement of Accounts 2025-26

ii. OPCC DRAFT Statement of Accounts 2025-26

JP presented the draft statements of accounts, highlighting:

- A year-end underspend of 0.29% had been achieved.
- 87% of planned savings had been delivered.
- General reserves had increased slightly and remain broadly comparable with sector averages.
- Capital expenditure totalled £23.8million.
- Internal borrowing continues to fund capital investment.

CK congratulated officers on publishing the accounts by the statutory deadline.

Q: CK queried reserves levels and requested simplified summary information in future reports to support committee scrutiny?

A: JP advised reserve levels remain broadly consistent with sector averages at approximately 3.8%.

LC advised the SCO is undertaking a review of the reserves in light of governance reform and may require higher reserve levels to manage transition risks.

Q: CK queried funding arrangements for future capital expenditure.

A: JP confirmed that internal borrowing continues to be utilised.

10. Governance

i. JARC DRAFT Terms of Reference 2026

CK advised that amendments had been discussed during the pre-meeting session, including arrangements where sensitive reports or papers may need to be withheld from the Committee or the public forum.

It was agreed that amendments would be incorporated before the final issue of the Terms of Reference at the September JARC meeting.

ii. Annual Work Plan for JARC – FORCE and SCO

CK presented the Annual Work Plan for 2026.²⁷

11. AOB

No further business was raised.

The date and time of next meeting is - **Tuesday 29 September 2026 10am at Fire Headquarters.**