ETAP Review of the Commissioner's Independent Scrutiny Panels (CISP) Project

What did we review and why is this important?	In 2021 the new Staffordshire Commissioner (SC) set up a project to examine the effectiveness of Safer Neighbourhood Panels (SNP), which had been set up in 2016, in: • Scrutinising two important areas of policing: Stop and Search and Use of Force • Holding to account the Commanders of Neighbourhood Policing teams A project plan was put in place to examine how current arrangements were working and to propose and deliver changes needed to develop good practice in Staffordshire. This review looks at how that plan was implemented, how that process of change was handled and what was delivered. This is an important area because effective independent local scrutiny should support the building of public confidence in our local police service.
How did we go about the review?	We had a briefing session with the Stafford Commissioner's Office (SCO) Head of Governance & Assurance, and were provided access to the relevant project documentation. This documentation covered the five stages of the project, from October 2021 up to the new arrangements going live in April 2022. (A further ETAP review will focus on the first 12 months of operational delivery of the new arrangements). Following our initial review of the project documentation we held a meeting as a team (ETAP review team only) to discuss the documents and to flag any follow-up queries. We then emailed the SCO Head of Governance & Assurance with our queries. Following receipt of answers to our queries we held a follow-up session with the SCO Head of Governance & Assurance to address outstanding queries and to hone the content of our review. Specifically, we looked for answers to these questions: 1. How effectively was the project managed? 2. Did it run to time and how were any delays recognised/dealt with? 3. Were the right people involved? 4. Were recommendations well-evidenced, based on key legislation and informed by good practice elsewhere? 5. What measurements of 'success' were used, were these achieved and, if not, why not? 6. What did the SC's project team learn from the project and how was that learning captured for the future? ETAP members are not 'experts' or 'auditors'. We are a panel of independent local individuals appointed to bring transparency and openness to the workings of our Staffordshire FARS and Police Force Two ETAP members, Jane King and Craig Brown, worked on this review.
What did we find?	We found that:

- The rationale for replacing SNP with CISP was robust and evidence-based. It focussed on benchmarking with other PCC governance & scrutiny functions. This exercise revealed;
  - That no other areas operated a scheme with the exact function of Staffordshire's SNP, but did operate panels with specific purposes, such as out of court disposals and stop & search.
  - That, if benchmarked, Staffordshire's SNP model would be less effective than other areas, due to it being over-reliant on Neighbourhood Policing, rather than other topics such as those listed above.
  - That there had been changes to the appropriate methods of external scrutiny, acknowledged in external reports from HMICFRS and the Home Office.
- The three core scrutiny areas of CISP were outlined as Stop & Search, Use of Force, and Custody & Detention, to be accompanied by a panel reviewing ad-hoc topics. It was shown that there is a legal obligation to perform reviews of the three core scrutiny areas.
- The demographic make-up of the existing SNP panels was analysed and compared to Staffordshire demographics. This covered ethnicity, age, gender, and sexual orientation. The need for a more diverse and representative panel was recognised.
- Critical success factors for the transition were outlined.
- Timescales and key deliverables were outlined, broken down into six key items; SNP notification, Scope build & role profile, Meeting arrangements, Recruitment, Training, and 'Steady state' (CISP up and running).
- The financial implications of the change were considered, and clearly outlined.
- To help ensure that the best decision was taken, optioneering was carried out comparing the proposal to a 'Do nothing' and a 'Force driven scrutiny' approach. This offered assurance that alternative options were considered.
- The role profile for CISP members was made clear and the interview process was structured.
- HMICFRS, the Home Office, and IOPC all outlined the need for "well-trained" panels. A training plan was put together for all members, both new and those transferring from the SNP. Specific training was designed for each panel.
- The proposal was discussed at the Force's Strategic Governance Board (SGB) and accepted.
- A schematic was provided outlining the responsibilities and flow of work for CISP.
- There were 86 places on SNP, not all of which were occupied. The plan for CISP was for each of the three core scrutiny areas to have a panel of eight members (total:24), with a further 25 available places for ad-hoc panels. 20 SNP members resigned between May and August 2021 and these were not backfilled. Not all of the places were filled on CISP.
- It was recognised, through analysis of the panels' demographics against the Staffordshire general population, that the panels were not representative of the communities they served. To address this, a new approach to recruitment was taken which included the use of targeted social media adverts. This has been successful, as reported back to HMICFRS, who had previously noted the lack of diversity on the panel.
- There was a Terms of Reference (ToR) for SNP; this was replaced by a scope document for CISP.

	• It was noted that 'Phase two' of the review would later be undertaken, looking at Commander accountability for policing in their neighbourhood area and independent scrutiny and oversight roles. However, this was not carried out.
What questions/advice do we have?	We have been able to glean good information from the documentation alongside the sessions with the SCO Head of Governance & Assurance. We do still have questions, observations and advice on the following; 1. Each key deliverable was tracked on an Excel spreadsheet which showed target end dates, owners and support, and a RAG status. However, we would suggest that more robust project management techniques were employed for future similar projects, such as the use of Gantt charts. 2. When the proposed transition from SNP to CISP was tabled at the SGB meeting, the minutes do not offer any insight into how this was discussed. It was noted that the proposal was accepted but there was no further detail. Further discussions we had revealed that the SGB had had early sight of the document and discussions had been held leading up to this meeting, so the proposal was not put forward 'blind'. Regardless, from a governance perspective it would be advisable for the minutes to offer more detail. 3. In relation to the 20 SNP members who resigned between May and August 2021 – while we were advised that the reasons for resignations are captured at exit and analysed, what, if anything, is done with this data to improve future recruitment drives? 4. Demographics and the need for the panel to be more diverse and reflective of Staffordshire were a common theme throughout the documentation. When performing the analysis on demographics; a) It was recognised that there was a need to recruit a more diverse panel, and it was stated that a different approach was needed. This different approach took the form of using targeted social media adverts, and this worked well with more applications than normal, but Facebook later removed the option for targeted adverts. What was the difference in cost between this and a 'typical' recruitment campaign, and will this approach to recruitment ('lessons learnt') be taken moving forward, considering its success, and also considering Facebook no longer allowing targeted adverts? 5. We felt that the key risks outlined in the proposal document were fairly limited; there was only one risk listed, *'Volunteer disengagement, resignation'*. While it was explained that emergent risks were kept on a separate risk register as the project was underway, we would have expected a few more risks recognised at the outset, particularly recognising that recruitment campaigns run previously had not delivered on diversity. 6. The ad-hoc panels have not been well defined, and work has not started on them post-transition. During the planning and execution stages of the project transitioning from SNP to CISP, at what point was it recognised that the ad-hoc panels would not start as expected, what was done to mitigate this, and was the impact of not starting the ad-hoc panels assessed during the project? 7. Phase two of the review did not go ahead – can the reason for this be clarified? 8. When the project concluded, can you clarify whether a 'wash-up' session (or similar) was held and what was drawn from this, and if not, what the rationale for not having one was?
Response	Responses Provided by the SCO Head of Governance & Assurance.

	1. The Force is rolling our considerable upgrades in IT equipment and software, we envisage as part of this that project management software will be made available to utilise.
	2. The SCO accepts there is a lack of detail within the minutes of the meeting and has addressed this with the Business Support Function.
	3. All reasons for resignation are captured and checked on a quarterly basis by the Governance & Assurance Team. This is to ensure that resignations are not as a result of negative experiences with volunteering roles.
	4. We have continued to use 'paid for' adverts with Facebook. These are usually cheaper than advertising in specific printed or online news outlets. Although Facebook has removed the ability to target certain demographics through their advert algorithms, recent recruitment has been equally as successful in terms of volume of applicants. The Governance & Assurance Team will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of this in future recruitment drives.
	5. Other risks identified through the project delivery were added to the SCO Operational Risk Register as they became apparent. Discussions at the point of developing the CISP Proposal did not envisage these risks, however on reflection it may have been prudent to reflect the interdependencies of other SCO departments as a risk in the document.
	6. The first piece of scrutiny identified for the Ad-Hoc panel was defined with a scoping document, however the Force have not been in a position to support that initial piece of scrutiny or subsequent scrutiny sessions for that panel.
	7. In considering all arrangements in place internally to Staffordshire Police, externally by regulatory / inspectorate bodies and independently by the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office. We found that these arrangements provided the Commissioner with the level of assurance required, this is particularly due to the coverage being provided through the Commissioner's Independent Scrutiny Panels (CISP). CISP have a wide-ranging remit and we have agreed with Staffordshire Police that volunteers on the Ad-Hoc Panel will also provide resilience as required to Staffordshire Police Independent Advisory Group (IAG), this generating access for Staffordshire Police of a larger pool of Staffordshire residents who can bring significant experience, knowledge, skills and lived experiences. Therefore, there was no requirement to follow up with Phase 2.
	8. There was not a dedicated wash up session for the project nor was there a conscious decision not to have one, the team had regular project meetings which were evidence to the review team. As the project had landed in a positive and successful way and the deliverables were met the Governance & Assurance Team moved smoothly from project delivery to operational delivery. Positive findings from the project were noted by the team in team meetings, such as the use of paid adverts for recruitment and these were adopted as business as usual by the team. There were no significant negative findings from the project to note.
Follow-up actions	None required in relation to this First Stage Review
Date for further review/checking on completion	A further Second Stage ETAP review will examine the operation of the new CISP arrangement later in spring 2023, at which point the Panels will have been up and running for a full twelve months.