



**joint audit & risk
committee**

Building trust in policing and fire and rescue



**Minutes of the Joint Audit and Risk Committee
Police & Crime Meeting
Date: 25 November 2025
Location: Fire HQ, Room 1**

Present:

ETAP members	Officers
Chris Key(CK) Chair	Sarah Wilkes – SCO Director of Finance (SW)
Bryon Preece (BP)	Louise Clayton - SCO Chief Executive (LC)
Craig Brown (CB)	Kathryn Grattage – Governance Manager (KG)
Emma Christmas (EC)	Rebecca Riggs – Acting Chief Constable (RR)
Gurpreet Singh (GS)	John Bloomer - Force Director of Resources (JB)
	Jasraj Purewal - Force Head of Accounting (JP)
	External Officers in attendance
	Daniel Harris – RSM (DH)
	Paul Grady - Partner Azets Auditors (PG)
	Reshma Ravikumar - Audit Manager Azets (RRa)
SCO - Staffordshire Commissioner’s Office	
Force - Staffordshire Police - Force	
FARS - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services	

18 members of the public were in attendance today. Including students and staff from Newcastle and Stafford College. CK welcomed the students to the meeting and provided an overview of the function of JARC and attendees.

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

Committee Updates: CK confirmed that a member of the Committee had attended the recent CIPFA update session and fed back to the Committee. CK also confirmed that he had had Teams meetings with two other Audit Committee Chair’s regarding how their committees function, and that there are benefits from learning how other committees operate.

CK highlighted that one region discussed risk entirely within closed sessions to enable, in their view, a more open discussion of potentially sensitive matters. This is a possible reflection for JARC but it is important that the JARC balances being transparent with being efficient and effective.

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

Declarations of Interest: None

Apologies: Emma Crandige and Deb Wilne – Staffordshire Police. Louisa Harrison - JARC

Minutes & Actions of the meeting on the 24 September 2025 -

AGREED - That the minutes of the meeting held on the 24 September 2025, are confirmed as an accurate and true record.
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2. Questions from members of the public – there were no questions submitted to this meeting

3. Update from Acting Chief Constable: Rebecca Riggs

RR introduced herself and raised some items that are on the radar from a national perspective. The Autumn budget is due today and the Police Reform white paper is due in a matter of weeks, and this coincides with the recent news around the abolishment of Police and Crime Commissioners. There is suggestion that there will be considerable reform around policing, it is not known at this stage what this looks like but anticipating that this could include details around how the current 43 Forces will be structured.

The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee Commitment has been issued with a national target for around an extra 13,000 individuals into policing nationally, this equates to 53 officers in Staffordshire committed to policing the local community at a neighbourhood level. Staffordshire is making good progress in the implementation of this, with each community now having an identified named individual and visible patrols. The Force has recruited 53 new officers, and they are currently going through training, RR had spoken with them all on their first day, and it was pleasing to see a variety of diversity and talent coming into the organisation.

Financially there is a Change and Efficiencies programme overseen by DCC Marsh, the Force is making good progress around the efficiencies required this year. To date they have made about 85% of the efficiency target, which is about £8million in savings in this financial year, and they are making progress for the next financial year 2026-27. However, it is not all about savings and there have been some significant investments in technology, this will assist officers and staff around transcribing, redaction, automation, and body worn video upgrades. Work is ongoing at Headquarters around the new Firing Range, which is making good progress, and will additionally provide space for training and learning for staff across the County. The refurbishment of Longton Police Station has now been completed, and this is a vast improvement in terms of the working environment for officers and staff.

There is a considerable amount of work ongoing around digital and the digital forensic programme. The digital world impacts on the types of crime that are now seen, and there is a need to have further investment in the digital space, around evidence capture in relation to mobile phones, ring doorbells and CCTV, good progress is being made in this area.

Finally in regard to Automation and AI, the Force is using robotics to assist with some of the demand in relation to closing crime categorization and using robotics to assist with this. The Force is commencing a project in the Control Centre using AI technology to support with self-serve for the

public in non-emergency contact, which should ease the pressure on the 101 line around call abandonment and wait times, which is an area that needs improvement.

There is a focus going forward on how the Force can improve the speed in taking 999 calls and the 101 calls and responding to the public, whether they are emergency calls or Grade 2 calls.

In terms of performance there are some good headlines for the organisation, they are seeing continuous improvements day in and day out. In terms of neighbourhood crimes there has been a reduction of 13%, burglary is down almost 25% and whilst there have been some increases nationally and locally around Anti-Social behavior the work that is being done in hotspot locations has seen considerable reductions and improvements with regards to the reduction of crime and getting to the root causes of some of the scenarios.

The Child Protection Inspection was conducted in May, and early reflections are there is real strength in partnership working, which is a testament to the staff, officers and partners. There are some areas where the Force knows it needs to make improvements; in areas of missing children and recognising the risks to those missing children and around areas of Domestic Abuse. It is anticipated that the inspection report will be published on the 5th December.

There is an imminent Custody Inspection due as part of the Peel regime. There has been good progress in preparation for the inspection. The area that causes the most concern is around the custody estate rather than the systems, processes and risk assessments. This begins on the 1st of December and they will expect the Peel report towards the end of February 2026.

Finally, around inspections, the Force has just had its Forensic Accreditation Inspection, and whilst it has not yet had the formal public report, early indication is that the Force has done well in terms of retaining the accreditation it should retain the accreditation for the next 12 months.

Overall, the Force is making good progress, whilst recognising there is still a need for some improvements, but it also recognises that there is good strong work ongoing throughout the organisation.

Q: CK thanked RR for the update and asked that now you are in the Chief Constable position how comfortable are you, and how adequate is the support around you in the role internally and from other forces?

A: RR confirmed that she was the Deputy Chief Constable prior to this position and has been in Staffordshire for the last three years and has served at each executive level. RR knows the Force well and has good strong colleagues around her, who have as a minimum 26 years of policing experience wrapped around each one. RR has 32 years of experience and expertise and brings some strategic national working. RR has owned the National Child Protection portfolio for the last 18 months; this has received a lot of interest this year in relation to the grooming gangs and group-based offending. RR added that whilst coming into this particular role was unexpected, RR is comfortable with what I am delivering each and every day and the team that is wrapped around me, more broadly the full support of the PCC Office and equally from the National Police Chiefs Council. Support is available to bring in independent views and validation on some of the perspectives to ensure there are no blind spots and there is external benchmarking. RR thanked the Chair for asking, but confirmed that she is confident that she has all the support she needs for however long the term is in this particular role.

Q: CK added with regards to investments, and the significant investments upwards of £30million, are you comfortable that you have the leadership skills and capacity in IT and Estates, as these are challenging projects to deliver?

A: RR confirmed there had been some gaps in skills particularly in the IT area, but the Force now has a leader of Digital Data and Technology (DDAT) who has been in position for around 9 months is doing a good job and has a good background in that particular space. The other area where we recognised there were some gaps was Change and Benefits realisation, the Force recruited an individual with a really good corporate background 6 months ago to close those gaps. Operationally Staffordshire is strong, and there is really strong leadership in operational command, which you would expect in traditional policing spheres. Having brought in some of the experts to the other areas I feel that our ambition to be an outstanding force can be realised, with additional experience and enhanced layers.

Q: GS it is good news on bringing the crime rates down, what has brought these rates down and what have the drivers been behind that?

A: RR looking back to my arrival here we were very much firefighting demand and now the pendulum has shifted, and we are looking at a problem-solving approach, working with partners and trying to get to the root cause of some of the enduring threats. We have been listening to what communities want, what their fears are and their different concerns. The teams are really focused on priorities for individual command areas but not just tackling the issue as this will never be solved with policing alone, and we need to come at this with partnerships.

It was very pleasing that the HMICFRS inspection commented on the partnerships and the previous PEEL inspection talked about the problem-solving approach, which was assessed as good, and we are anticipating that the Force will continue on this good trajectory. The approach is very much about bringing other enhancements to the picture that look for vulnerability and tackle that in a partnership way, but long before it gets to crisis management and criticality we are dealing with it at a very low level, which means that the early intervention doesn't necessarily mean that it is going through a criminal justice regime, it might be that the problem solving is about enhanced services for that particular family or that particular area. It is more about being proactive, we have integrated new teams as a result of being more proactive and there is a lot of work done in specialist crime around proactivity, which is key. Making great places is a really good example of how we have done this locally and done this with other partners on board, dealing with housing elements, vulnerability elements and safeguarding etc.

Q: CB the Force is investing in technology in AI etc. It will take a lot of time and money to put those into place; how will you measure the operational success of those investments?

A: RR we recognise that we can't grow as an organisation and that there are limitations, most of our funds go on people and salaries and that is a challenge. It is a fine balance in terms of technology combined with the people. One of the reasons the Force has appointed a Change Programme Lead is about realising some of those benefits. When we put proposals forwards there are a number of benefits that will play out, and some of that is around easing the pressure on people time by utilising technology and AI, rather than relying on a person to extract information from a system. We have had investment already around Power BI, which is a really good tool and helps people to understand what some of the local challenges are and we are becoming a more data driver organisation. Freeing up that time affords more visibility, which is what people want to see, their PCSO's and officers out in the community. In terms of tracking, this is done in a multitude of ways, some of that is about data, tracking the programme itself and some is around finances, delivering on time and within budget and helps us ensure we are making the savings through that technology. Some of that will be about holding leaders to account through the monthly performance board, to make sure we are hitting targets.

Q: CB you mentioned Power Bi and AI is there a risk operationally with only a handful of people who understand this technology and how to manage it?

A: RR no I am really comfortable, Power BI has been around for approximately two years, and it is part of everyday business now. This type of technology will be utilised by supervisors coming on duty and middle managers. The Force has set some key milestones of where we want to be as an organisation, and this helps all leaders monitor progress across the board day in and day out. Power BI is an everyday tool now and welcomed by all. Axon is similar and utilised by staff involved in investigations, that technology will automate and transcribe some of the body worn videos automatically, including translation, so this will speed up some of the time taken in the traditional typing of the statements and allows editing and redactions.

JB added that the redaction tool is very intuitive, it knocks about 90% off the time required to redact a document. So, there are two key points for this conversation, firstly around having less systems that do more so there is less training requirement and so it makes use easier. Secondly it is in relation to buying systems that are easy to use, most traditional policing systems are not intuitive, they are business systems. New software designs are being built to look like systems you would use at home, so investing in intuitive systems cuts down on training needs and the ability to maintain the knowledge. A key detail is that someone will still need to check what the system has produced.

RR added in regard to technology and the police service, you would expect all of the systems to be secure, and meeting cyber standards is expected. So, it is not as simple as just purchasing any technology; all the systems have to meet expectations to keep the public information safe. Everything used needs to meet high thresholds to assure public confidence, so there are a few extra layers.

Q: GS Just to confirm are the Performance Board meetings every month?

A: RR yes, they are held monthly and usually chaired by DCC Marsh. The board will review performance information, draw out crucial elements of risks and threats and look at good performance and organisational learning. Importantly if things are not being achieved what are the blockers around this? The meeting takes a number of hours and goes through not just crime but the workforce mix, sickness ratios and complaints, so it is looking at performance more broadly

4. Internal Auditors RSM:

i. Progress Paper

DH provided a summary of the current year's work. The key message from this report is that RSM have finalised 3 agreed reviews from the 2025/26 plan, there have been two positive opinions and one advisory. One audit is currently in draft and a further is underway with fieldwork, these are summarised in Appendix A. There have been some changes, and a summary of these are in Appendix B. RSM is confident that the plan can be delivered. There is nothing negative that has been issued to date and there is nothing to flag to the Committee at this meeting. A number of briefings have also been issued this quarter.

ii. Follow-Up Review

RSM is independently reviewing where actions have been closed and implemented, and a follow-up review is often done on a sample basis. From the previous Key Financial and Finance Systems audits

RSM has followed up six actions in total; 3 medium and 3 low priority actions; a summary is on page four of the report paper.

From Finance Systems all four of the actions are fully implemented. On the Key Financial Controls review there was one systems development action related to Integra and automated reminders for debt. There are technical issues to overcome around this which have delayed the implementation of this action and this will be revisited at a later date.

Q: GS there has been no date put in yet for this action, is that due to Integra?

A: DH yes, the Force is reliant on the software provider, this is being worked on by the finance team behind the scenes, and they are getting a date agreed.

Q: GS the original action was in relation to automatic reminders for debtors, so what is the current process?

A: JP this is a manual process at present, with email reminders being issued to chase the debts, and there is the same issue for Fire, so the organisations are working together on this.

Q: CB has this resulted in a delay in collection of debts or debts not being collected?

A: JP confirmed that there has been no impact or delay on the collection of debts.

CK concluded that there is reasonable progress being made.

iii. **Capital Programme – Southern Area Custody Review**

The background of this report was to focus on the data quality and the evidence available to support the options appraisal for the custody proposal and the investment. Six options have been put forward, supported by performance-related data, estimated costs, risks and issues and the conclusion can be found on page three. There is a Reasonable Assurance opinion overall which is a positive opinion and the report stated that reasonable steps and processes have been followed, acknowledging that this is in the early stages. Risks and issues have been identified; there is a clearly documented range of costs and options and consideration of how to mitigate.

One substantive finding, which is a high priority action, is that some of the underlying data differed from the performance reports to the figures in the options papers that were put forward. RSM would have wanted to see that the evidence available was followed through and married up in the reports. There were some issues around the custody numbers and the capacity figures that were quoted were different. The Percentage figures were also different, and the waiting time data also differed. There were three examples where RSM couldn't reconcile the performance reports back to the options papers. This potentially could have been due to the fact that some of the timelines didn't marry up, but the action is that this is fully understood, and to ensure that any decision making is based on the right data.

Q: EC noted that the reconciliation was quite a big issue, this wasn't just a little bit of variant, whether this be timing, the data difference was quite significant. The Committee were surprised by the Reasonable Assurance, and although this action is high priority, does this audit require a follow-up review? If the data is used to make decisions in an evidence-based way, which is the correct process, if the underlying data cannot be reconciled then those decisions could be floored, and there are questions around the data that need a follow-up.

A: JB just to qualify this is the timing. The performance data was taken in July 2025, but the options paper was written on 19th June 2024. So, there is a twelve-month gap in between. Custody numbers are growing, the data does vary due to nature of policing, and as police officer numbers grow the numbers of arrests will grow.

Q: EC added that when it then comes to options papers how are you going to use the data to support an evidence-based decision? This is an issue, and it may be due to timing, but it cannot be reconciled. This is something to be discussed whether this is taken as a snapshot, or averages. It is great that data is being used as this can be reflected on and revisited, however if when this is scrutinised if can't be reconciled there is a fundamental floor in how this is being used, and it needs to be reviewed further.

A: JB the point in time is being chosen and the data has changed over the years, and this is not just around the arrest data. The easy yard stick to understanding is to look at other data, if you were to heat map Staffordshire the closer you are to a custody facility the closer you are to being arrested. Need to be confident that there is other data around custody that flows into the data, volume of arrests and business continuity and the difference between Northern Area and Southern Area Custody capacities and facilities.

Q: EC added that if data is being used to base a decision on then you would expect the data to be able to be reconciled. Is there going to be a follow-up on this and is that planned?

A: DH there is a follow-up set for this, scheduled for the end of January 2026 and the implementation date for this action is 31st March 2026. Subject to agreeing the timelines, and given this is a high priority action, then RSM would be happy to independently confirm that they can see the reconciliation with the report that has informed the opinions.

ACTION 1: RSM to please report back to JARC, at either March 2026 or June 2026 meetings, confirming whether or not they are satisfied the custody-related data now adequately reconciles between various reports.

Q: GS the management action relates to the performance data recorded, which is quite broad. How will the Force ensure that this has been actioned?

A: JB If a person goes through Custody there is a legal record of this, so the numbers are correct, the issue is at the point of reconciliation used for the business case. The Options Paper ends with the data from 2023, and this is around the data due to when it is produced. The Force will have another two years of data to use, and the data is broad. Will need to use the most up to date data and additional types of data will be required. The discrepancy is due to the data being taken at different points in time and there is not an issue with the raw data.

CK added that the Committee will assume that the management will be getting the correct data to make the decision and that there will be a follow-up from RSM.

iv. Overtime

This is the third of three reports, and the main focus of the review is in relation to the control framework around overtime allocation, and the tight controls in place for overtime spend. The conclusion is that controls are in place, they were largely well designed and complied with Value for Money considerations. There were specific controls around allocation with high earner reports, and these were considering elements outside of the financial complications e.g. wellbeing etc.

There is still an overspend at June 2025 of circa 20% but this is an improvement on prior year levels. The overarching conclusion is that the controls are in place in terms of allocation, oversight and monitoring but in regard to demand it is not just Staffordshire that faces overtime demand. If the Force has vacancies, that can lead to overtime levels increasing. RSM has agreed one low priority action and reiterates that it is not uncommon to have an overtime budget that is constantly under pressure. There is a well-designed robust framework in place around this level of expenditure but there is a constant demand for overtime.

EC added that when the Committee previously had a Finance Panel, overtime was always considered, and the Committee is aware that processes have been put in place to proactively manage the demand. IT improvements have made this easier and more effective, as the Force goes more into budgetary pressures overtime is one of the elements that can still be reviewed.

Q: GS in the findings RSM noted a few areas for consideration, is there anything fundamental that is missing from the policy that has led to inefficiencies?

A: DH I don't think this has led to inefficiencies, RSM has said to consider incorporating these areas. It might be that this comes through from the specific arrangements in Staffordshire and not all of those areas want to be incorporated. It was agreed as part of the scope that RSM would do a check and challenge from other policies and there is nothing fundamental.

Q: CB in the management action it says that the Force will continue to improve their draft overtime policy, what is being built into the new draft policy?

A: JB It is useful to benchmark across other forces. In terms of where the overtime budget is spent which drives policy, about two thirds is spent plugging resource gaps. Staffordshire has set the lowest Council Tax since 2010 cumulatively and now has a lower number of police officers as a direct result of this. As Staffordshire has a lower base number of police officers then this quickly leads to higher spikes in overtime.

In relation to demand, of the 43 police forces Staffordshire has the 12th/13th highest level of demand but the 4th lowest number of police officers. Home Office statistics show that Staffordshire police officers arrest more individuals per year than any other force in the country on average. The use of overtime around events is pretty good around local control, and there is not much left to give around the planned piece. Cancelled rest days is a plug but this has an impact on officers' wellbeing, there is a balance and planning helps to alleviate this.

Q: CK is it true that some of the overtime around planned activity is funded from other areas, with additional funding?

A: JB the disorder in summer 2024 in Hanley and Tamworth, the total cost of funding this was around £3million for two days, which is on top of business-as-usual work. The Home Office did reimburse this cost in full but not the effect on the business as usual. This underpins why the Force holds reserves. In summer 2025, the protests did require management and managing these protests is expected to cost around £500million and that is not funded.

Q: BP overtime appears to be a consistent issue, and the policy is being reviewed now, but when was it last reviewed and what is the timescale for regular reviews of the policy?

A: JB the policy should be reviewed every three years. Policing football can be expensive, and this can depend on fixtures. The Force needs to maintain the King's Peace and needs to review what can be pulled from business as usual, overtime and pulled rest days. Some of the policy is around who is authorising this and providing permission for officers to do overtime.

v. Benchmarking Report

Highlights of the report; Whilst the report shows on pages 5 and 6, slightly higher numbers of negative opinions for Staffordshire and hence a higher high to medium actions, it was reported that this is not a fair comparison as RSM conducts a higher number of audits for Staffordshire Police, at their request, than with other sector clients. The type and number of audits is different across different clients, so the report does need to be read with that context. RSM tries to pull out the high priority concerns anonymized and themes nationally.

CK added the high degree of work conducted by RSM shows a robust attitude towards seeking independent views on various aspects of governance.

5. External Auditors: Draft Annual Report including Value For Money

The report summarises the work across the audit programme. There are two core aspects to the work: the financial statements and the statutory back stop date of 26th February 2026. The other part is the Value for Money work which is wide ranging.

A detailed review has been taken and Azets has not identified any significant areas of weakness across either the Force or the Staffordshire Commissioners' Office. Azets has not raised any other recommendations, which is partly a reflection that the arrangements in place across both offices are fairly good, and that there are no concerns regarding the depth of consideration that is given to financial forecasting and the information available. Azets has reviewed the risk registers, there is nothing on the risk register that they would not expect to see.

The report becomes a public document, and shares with the community of Staffordshire, Azets' view of the arrangements in place. The Financial Statements will be formally concluded in February 2026.

RRa added that the work is ongoing. As outlined in the audit plan the work is split into three phases. Phase one focuses on the 2024-25 balances, which involves testing the closing balances and the balance sheet on specific items, and reviewing income expenditure for the year. Phase two involves building back assurance, for the disclaimed period and goes back to the last unqualified period. Phase three is the more challenging aspect of rebuilding assurance over the prior year, income and expenditure. The extent of this work only became clear in June when Government guidance (known as 'LARIG 06' guidance) was issued. This essentially requires a detailed risk assessment; this has been started and includes both qualitative and quantitative elements.

Based on work completed so far Staffordshire Police falls at the lower end of the risk spectrum, essentially low to medium. The finance team are very engaged and helpful and further details will be shared in February.

Under the new code this report needs to be produced every November and will be finalised at the end of February each year.

CK added that he had spoken to two regions recently who are behind where Staffordshire are in terms of reporting and accounting. There is good triangulation on the robustness of the systems and this is a very positive report particularly on the financial sustainability and the quality and integrity of data. Combined with the reporting from Internal Auditors on the systems then it is generally positive and robust which is a comfort factor for the Committee and for the process, governance and financial integrity.

Q: CK on general reserves you make the point that they are low at circa 4% or recurring revenues but the mitigation is there are great systems and a good management team, and earmarked reserves are significant in that they are earmarked but they can come into play. Is that a fair summary?

A: PG it is yes, there is no hard and fast rule regarding the 4%, but the wider assessment of risk including the historic management and accommodating the unforeseen all informs that, plus the earmarked reserves, which remain useable subject to policy change. There are no particular concerns regarding the level of reserves in place.

GS added that the report was very detailed and a really good report, which is why there were no additional questions from the Committee.

6. Risk Update Force:

There has been minimal change to the Force Risk and Issue register since the last meeting. Over the last quarter, within the scoring, it shows that the direction of travel is going the right way.

With regards to the Force radar risk and public trust and confidence there is a local and national risk of sexual misconduct in public office, this is not specific to Staffordshire. The news regarding the abolition of the Police and Crime Commissioner will need to be considered going forward. There is also a white paper regarding Police Reform which is due next month. There may be more centralisation around decision making around IT systems and facilities but there are some issues that need to be resolved around this and the ownership of commodities.

There are risks regarding Artificial Intelligence, its impact, business use and the impact on crime. There are solutions to AI use and impact is high, content generation on the internet is more AI based than human. This will be quite significant going forwards, and Cyber Security in this space will be key going forwards and how does this evolve. It is important to take this away and it is a real risk to manage.

Q: CK the templates for the reports were good and looked new.

A: JB there is a lot of work which has been done in this area, and the Force is pretty good in the risk arena. The framework reviews how the Force deals with risk and the scoring definitions. The Matrix gives a score and is related to the level of risk, the likelihood and the impact, if these are high then a risk will end up on the Risk Register. Regarding the approach to risk there is a golden thread which follows through all the departments and on to the Force Risk Register. One area of focus has been on risk owners, so who owns the risk and why and this is set out in the report. Traditionally this sat with Chief Officers but to make an impact this may sit with different areas across the Force.

Q: CB the report discusses who the risk identifiers are and that the ownership of risks goes wider than this. How do you ensure that culture is imparted across all of the organisation?

A: JB in a policing context the Force trusts police officers to deal with operational risk, which can sometimes be a conflict, so there is an educational piece that goes through the Risk Register at board levels and there is a deep dive on a quarterly basis, and all the command levels have an understanding of risk. The Governance team will work with departments to get consistency across the organisation. There is constant training on what is risk and how to deal with this. The challenge faced is balancing operational risk with holding an organisation risk.

Q: CB the documents are under review as part of a wider piece of work, what is the time frame for this and who is leading?

A: JB Deb Wilne is the lead and reports directly into the Deputy Chief Constable, this should flow into the Annual Governance Statement in about four months' time. Any feedback regarding the templates can be fed through to DW.

Finance – Medium Term Financial Statement (MTFS) SCO Update:

The MTFS update was presented to the Police Fire and Crime Panel last week.

Highlights from the report include an update based on Quarter Two, reviews of the year-end forecast for 2025-26 and the budget assumptions. Setting the budget for the MTFS continues to be a challenge, and the Committee is asked to note the continued high level of financial uncertainty detailed in the report, including clarity around the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, the challenges regarding the Pay Award which places additional strain on the Force, and the comprehensive spending review figures. It is assumed that there will be a precept increase although the amount is not known at this point.

The budget timetable for 2026-27 is well underway, the current year forecast is in line with budget with a small positive variance, the detailed revenue position is set out in Appendix 1 of the report. At Quarter two the revised Capital Programme is at £32.4million. The outlying Capital Programme for each area is shown in Appendix 2.

The MTFS assumptions have been subject to scrutiny and review, with a starting point of the savings challenge at £10.9million which represents circa 4% of the overall budget. The planned revenue savings, pressures and capital spending is outlined in paragraph 4.1.

Regarding Pay awards the award for 2025-26 has been agreed at 4.2% compared to the budget uplift of 2.8% which was budgeted, which has added a £3.5million pressure to the budget. The Home Office provided £1.8million of funding to Staffordshire towards this, and it is assumed that there will be no further funding for the pay award and this will have to be absorbed locally.

Changes in the MTFS are shown in Table 4.2 with increases in the gap to 2028-29 amounting to £16.9million, this assumes a precept increase of 2.99% for 2026-27. The sensitivity analysis has been completed and is shown in paragraph 4.25. The Force has a comprehensive efficiency plan which has identified savings worth £4.8 million which leaves a further gap in funding, but work is underway to identify savings to close the shortfall.

The 2025-26 MTFS has assumed the use of Budget Reserves in the years 2025-26 to 2026-27, however this has been reversed in this report. It is important to note that whilst using the budget reserve remains available, this needs to be balanced against factors including smoothing out any incremental savings and allowing for targeted one-off investments. In relation to funding assumptions the Commissioner receives funding from a number of sources, core funding from the Home Office and the precept. Income assumptions are currently being reviewed and it is anticipated that the police funding settlement is to be received mid-December. In respect of the Council Tax precept there is some flexibility, the current assumption is based on a 2.99 % increase, which is £8.60 for a Band D property. The Commissioner will be consulting with residents shortly regarding this. Should the government allow the same flexibility in 2025-26 of £14 per annum for a Band D property, this would relate to an increase of circa 4.87% and would reduce the budget gap by £2million for 2026-27.

Q: CK the precept at 2.99% feels low, although it is appreciated that this has not yet gone out to consultation. An increase of 1% or 2% would help to support some of the gaps in funding, as there are financial pressures.

A: JB the pressures are across both the SCO and the Force. We have received the spending review that sets out total policing budgets but have not had the increase in the referendum. It is unhelpful that the total budget is not split between grant funding and precept funding, as this does not help the wider conversations. Within the MTFS modelling there is a national model that assumes a £14 increase in Precept, it is odd that this has been announced for Fire, but this has not yet been done for Policing, and we don't know the reasons for this. Regarding the budget, we are in a very strong place at the minute, within the change programme we have made one redundancy to date, other forces across the country could be looking at hundreds of redundancies. It will continue to be difficult going forwards and we also recognise that Staffordshire is a low funded police force.

Q: CK on the saving of £4.8million in section 4 of the report, is that saving over three years or is it an annual saving? Is this relating to reducing PCSO's?

A: JB there is no reduction in the number of PCSO's there may be a change to the times of day that they work. As part of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee we will grow the number of police officers by 53 this year. The evidence that we have shows that the peak time for Anti-Social Behaviour is between 3pm-5pm and is not 9pm at night. In terms of neighbourhood policing function there will be the same about of PCSO's and they will work the same number of hours, but the times of the shifts will change, which will bring them more in line with partner agencies. There will be a shift allowance change, the premium on pay is 14% for working between the hours of 7pm-10pm and delivering PCSO's at this time of day becomes expensive due to national terms of employment.

Regarding the £4.8million that's the revised gap for 2026-27 and this grows to £10.6million and £16.9million. If Staffordshire were to go to the maximum precept this gap is reduced. If the settlement is as expected and precept is as expected then we should be in a strong position.

Q: CK regarding the £32million Capital Expenditure how many years forward does that stretch to? What is the cycle is that 2 or 3 years? What is the risk to capital performance from items outside of your control, changes in PCC structures or Mayoral structure?

A: JB the change of governance structures needs to be recognised, and affordability will be a concern. There were previous decisions made during austerity which reduced the capital spent on estate maintenance and renewing the digital and physical estates, so this does need to be reviewed. The other risk to note is the Interest Rate risk. As the Bank of England dropped interest rates the borrowing has remained pretty static. Rates are currently around 6.5% if borrowing over a reasonable amount of time, but we are hoping that rates will drop next year, and then this will be reviewed again. It is a risk to be considered, it is not a cheap option right now, the borrowing rates in other European countries are much lower.

Q: CK some of the financial risks are out of your control, so is that why certain risks are not on the register as they are outside your control?

A: JB there is parts of this within the transformation risk. Things are changing and there is the progress of technology to consider, and the cost of borrowing may drive demand.

SCO Risk & Governance

Risk Update

SW is currently updating and reviewing the SCO's Risk Register, in terms of the format, the frameworks, the categories and the scoring of risks. There will be some new risks to add to register,

regarding devolution, and the recent announcement regarding Police Crime Commissioner changes. SW asked the Committee if in relation to the format would they like to see the SCO Risk Register mirror the format of the Force Risk Register? This can be considered when the review of the Register is undertaken.

CK added that there is a closed session on risk at the next meeting and all of this could be picked up in that closed session, as part of the reporting process.

PG added that a number of other force areas have taken the approach to having the same format across the different organisational Risk Registers.

CK confirmed that the Committee has received some Risk Register examples from RSM, and it was good that the organisations were alive to sharing.

LC added that the Committee might want to consider the Fire Risk Register as well and the format used by Fire.

SCO Update

There has been a Parliamentary announcement regarding the abolition of PCC's Offices. This was not a surprise in terms of the announcement, but the timing was a surprise. The office has been planning for the Local Government Reform, Devolution and transferring into a Mayoral Office but not as soon as 2028. The government has been less than clear on the transitional arrangements for the work if there is no Mayoral Office. It is believed that the office will move to a local Police and Crime board which will be led by the leaders of the top tiers of the current Councils until a Mayoral system is in place, and then the responsibilities will be transferred.

The office is working towards this and aware that it will have a significant impact on decision making. In Surrey, where they are transferring to a Mayoral system in 2027, they are waiting to be issued with a Section 24 notice, which will prevent them from making any significant decision and this is expected to be in place for 18 months before the office transitions to the Mayoral system. If the same timeline is applied to Staffordshire this probably means, there will be another 12 months when decisions can be made and then this will cease in preparation for the changes in May 2028.

There is a lot of change, and it is positive that there is now a timeline to work towards, but the biggest concern at the moment is managing the welfare of the teams and ensuring that the office is fit for the future. The SCO will be establishing a Change Board to ensure the office can work through all the necessary governance changes.

A White Paper is expected this side of Christmas, and recently in the select committee there was discussion around the centralization of more police work and the potential movement of Police Force Boundaries, there are no timelines known for this at the time so there will be a significant amount of change across the public sector over the next couple of years and this will cause issues.

ACC Riggs is now in place and Chris Noble remains suspended so there are no further updates at this time.

Q: BP with all of the changes that are coming might this create some staffing problems?

A: LC attracting and retaining talent will be a concern, and we expect some people may make decisions regarding their own future. History suggests that there is a lift and shift of the department apart from the PCC, and the key statutory roles of Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer. There

will still need to be teams in place, however we won't know what this will look like going forwards, and it may be different in Staffordshire once more detail is known.

AOB

The date and time of the next meeting is **March 17 2026, at Fire HQ, Room 1 @ 10am**

Chair thanked all for attending and offered the college students attending to speak with officers if there were any specific questions.