



joint audit & risk committee

Building trust in policing and fire and rescue



Minutes of the Joint Audit and Risk Committee

Police & Crime Meeting

Date: 24 September 2025 at 10:30am

Location: Room 1, Staffordshire Fire Headquarters

Present:

ETAP members	Officers
Chris Key (CK) Chair	Louise Clayton - SCO Chief Executive (LC)
Bryon Preece (BP)	Dave Evans – SCO Deputy Commissioner (DE)
Craig Brown (CB)	Kathryn Grattage – Governance Manager (KG)
Emma Christmas (EC)	
Gurpreet Singh (GS)	John Bloomer - Force Director of Resources (JB)
Louisa Harrison (LH)	Emma Cranidge - Force Service Director for Finance (ECr)
	Deb Wilne - Force Governance, Planning and Policy Manager (DW) Joined on TEAMS
	External Officers in attendance
	Louise Davies - Associate Director RSM (LD)
	Paul Grady - Partner Azets Auditors (PG)
SCO - Staffordshire Commissioner's Office	
Force - Staffordshire Police - Force	
FARS - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services	

No member of the public was in attendance today.

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

KG confirmed that the JARC election process had been completed in September and that Chris Key was re-elected as Chair and will serve a tenure of three years. Chris has appointed Emma Christmas to the role of Deputy Chair under the same tenure; both were welcomed to their new roles.

CK formally opened the meeting, recognising this is the first public meeting of the Joint Audit and Risk Committee. He thanked the members for joining the Committee under the new Terms of Reference and individual responsibilities have been assigned to each member, which will provide the opportunity for people to ask more questions relevant to their area.

CK added that the most important point to make is that continuity of the Committee will be maintained, and that this is a continuation of the strong panel acting with strong independent oversight in areas like governance, finance and risk management and the work will continue on behalf of the community of Staffordshire.

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

Declarations of Interest: None

Apologies: Dan Harris (RSM) Jasraj Purewal (Force) Azula Dudula (Azets) and David Greensmith (FARS)

Actions:

Action 1 from meeting 10 June 2025 **Completed**

Action 2 from meeting 10 June 2025 **Completed**

There were no further outstanding actions from previous meetings.

Minutes of the meeting of ETAP on the 10th June 2025:

AGREED - That the minutes of the ETAP meeting held on the 10 June 2025, are confirmed as an accurate and true record.

2. Questions from members of the public-

No Questions were submitted to this meeting.

3. Internal Auditors – Louise Davies RSM

LD introduced the Progress Report September 2025 and that there have been no finalised reports since the last meeting. There are four reviews in progress which should be brought to the next meeting.

The remaining work from the annual plan is on track and will be delivered for the end of the year, in time to provide the Internal Audit Opinion.

Q: GK the Follow-up Report has been delayed due to sponsors' responsibilities being reallocated. How has this impacted on the audit?

A: LD there was some data integrity on the previously critical report and some of the actions have been assigned to other people, this means that it was difficult to actually evidence what had happened. RSM were keen to ensure that the follow-up was with the right people, and to go through the processes a bit more. The final meetings have now been undertaken, and the report is about to be issued. From the work that has been done and to reassure the Committee it was pleasing to note the actions have been implemented, which is good progress in terms of the previous critical report.

Q: GK the report stated there should be four audit reports to be delivered by November, are RSM confident on delivering this?

A: LD yes, confident this can be delivered, there has been good engagement from the staff involved.

Q: GK the Cyber Security review is due to start, in terms of scoping has there been external input with this and has there been any specialist input?

A: LD yes this is due to start on 4 November and has been scoped with the specialist technology risk assurance team from RSM, the scope will be checked closer to the time in case any changes are needed.

Q: EC who is the main lead for Cyber Security in the Force now?

A: JB There are a number of roles with legal responsibility across the Force.

EC added that it is such a broad topic, and to make sure that an audit is effective it does need to be targeted exactly to the key areas.

There was further discussion around the Cyber Security Report and the sensitivity of this area that could not be discussed in the public domain due to the risks.

ACTION 1: To add a closed session for the Committee to discuss the Cyber Security Audit in more detail.

Q: CK the Committee is conscious that there are a lot of reports due at the November and March meetings but there have been no reports completed in the first few months of this year. Regarding the work schedule, how is this balanced across the year?

A: LD confirmed that the Final Audit Plan had not been approved until June this year. RSM have already discussed with the Force the planning process and will be starting this much sooner for next year, in November 2025. This will ensure the schedule is more evenly spread across the 12-month period.

Q: GK how does RSM plan for the years' audit, do you use an Audit Universe, or is it based on risk?

A: LD it is based on a number of different things, there are some audits that have to be done to ensure adequate coverage over the governance, risk management and systems of control. RSM also review the risk registers and look at what else is going on in the sector, and through discussions with key officers within the organisation.

Q: CK if you are reviewing the risk registers to help drive the work are you comfortable that what RSM is doing adequately reflects the strategic risk register as it stands?

A: LD yes, and when the reports come to JARC that is the Committee's opportunity to have that final check and challenge.

CK thanked LD for the report.

4. External Auditors AZETS – Update from Paul Grady

PG introduced the reports submitted to the Committee and confirmed that the external audit started this week in terms of the final accounts. The Audit plan was shared in terms of the journey to recovery, from the previous disclaimers. The focus this year is to gain assurance over the closing balance sheet of year one of three, this will not be possible on pensions because of the triennial position, but Azets will look to gain assurance.

The NEO have issued build back guidance, LARIG 6, which is endorsed by the FRC, this provides more detail on the way auditors can begin to gain assurance over previously disclaimed opinions. LARIG 6 has a comprehensive set of requirements which form a large risk assessment, which will be carried out this year. The risk assessment goes back over the disclaimed period and back to the last clear opinion. This assesses the level of risk that may be present in the unaudited years, and this will inform the work that needs to be done about the disclaimers in order to be fully recovered.

In summary, the lower the risk generally then less work is required over the previous years. The preliminary review is that as there was only one year disclaimed by EY, and in the absence of anything complicated, then it is more likely that Staffordshire will be at the lower end of risk, so the build back journey will be less cumbersome. There is a large analysis of all the reserves movements over the disclaimed years, that work is being undertaken by a specialist team, and the results should feed into the work that is being done.

The other piece of work which needs to be done this year is to build back on the PPE movements on the balance sheet, to look at any bits that couldn't be concluded last year. The best-case scenario is that, apart from pensions, the balance sheets are covered for one year, which means there are just two more years to go.

The build back work does come with a cost, the government has announced there is funding to cover the cost of additional build back work, which means essentially work which is outside of the scale fees. The caveat is that the accounts are produced on time, and that there is engagement with costs that are not exacerbated. This does mean if all goes well then Staffordshire could be one of the first Forces that move away from disclaimed opinions. There is also Value for Money work ongoing in the background, and this will be reported at the next meeting in November. Azets expects to conclude the audit by the backstop date, next February.

Q: GK it seems like everything is on track but why is the build back over three years, can you explain a little about this please?

A: PG yes, each year on a normal year there would be this year's closing figure and the comparative figures, which are essentially comprised of last year's closing figures, some of which were informed by last year's opening figures. The three years together make your three balance sheets, in order to get full assurance over the closing balance sheet and the comparators (which is opening and closing) this is why you need the three years balancing of assurance to build up.

Q: CK it is a positive report on the timeline, just to triangulate with JB & ECr, do you have the capacity to do this?

A: ECr the MTFS process is coming up, so it is around managing the work, everything seems to be okay, but we just need to keep an eye on this.

PG added that the Force has a lean and efficient finance team, won't be reporting it as a failure if unable to get it all done, and Staffordshire but will still probably be a year ahead of other forces.

Q: EC so the government has said it will cover the fee, just a question around the source of funds and the process to apply for these funds?

A: JB the grants have already been received, it is a set amount, there are some criteria relating to this and it will not be enough in some areas, but in Staffordshire we would expect to cover most of the costs, but it doesn't cover the cost of staffing.

CK thanked Azets for report.

5. Force Gifts & Hospitality Report – John Bloomer

This is an annual report that is presented here but the owners of the data are the anti-corruption unit (ACU). Reports are made on the system and dip sampling is done as part of their work programme. The table of the report shows what was accepted and declined in terms of gifts and hospitality.

As an organisation the Force is good at presenting what has been accepted but not always efficient in reporting what has been declined.

Q: CB there are a few really low value entries on the acceptance report, is it clear that staff must report when they have declined anything, even if it is just a box of biscuits?

A: JB yes, it is quite clear in the policy.

Q: GK the Chief Constable has accepted three conferences on the list, is that classed as part of the role or as gifts and hospitality?

A: JB if any part of this is paid for by the conference, then it needs to be declared that it has been gifted.

Q: GK regarding materiality thresholds, there is an entry for £1.15, which is really low is that going too far?

A: JB the policy is that everything must be declared, there is no lower threshold.

Q: LH it is positive that even the lower grade offers are being declared, is there internal guidance regarding not accepting and not offending people?

A: JB yes there is a lot of internal guidance about not offending people and turning gifts down politely.

Q: CB the report shows everything that has been accepted or declined but it does not state where the offer was from, other organisations do this is there a reason this is not shown on the report?

A: JB that information should be held, it has just not been reported. This can be taken away to look at.

ACTION 2: JB to review the request for organisation making the offer to be shown in the report, and to feed back to the Committee

Q: CB additionally, ACU manage the process, is there a process for identifying recurring recipients or donors, to basically tackle corruption. It would be interesting to have an insight into how that is identified and classified as a potential risk?

A: JB if a supplier is giving gifts to multiple people, or individuals are constantly accepting Gifts and Hospitality, or if someone is working a lot of overtime, then ACU would look at wider datasets regarding financial position.

Q: CB is this a manual process, or is there a system that automates this process? Reviewing, for example, a lot of gifts from the same donor?

A: JB this is manually done, and the majority are picked up on vetting checks, which are done on a regular basis with new and existing staff. The timescales between vetting have been shortened internally for existing staff, meaning checks are conducted more frequently. Anti-Corruption has risk profiles for individuals linked to job roles and there are different levels of vetting for different roles.

Q: BP if someone is challenged regarding accepting gifts is there a record of that challenge?

A: JB initially you have the policy guidance and individual integrity, then the challenge would be through the line manager, and the third line would be through the ACU.

Q: BP I have previously asked the question regarding if different forces have different standards, and what is the situation when you have someone transfer from another Force, are these types of things checked?

A: JB there are different levels of vetting for roles, and this has been tightened up significantly over the last 18 months nationally, including staff who transfer from other organisations. Vetting is also done internally with job movement within the force and the biggest demand on vetting is internal moves between roles, and this also includes moving between shifts.

EC added that it was positive to see there was an increased cycle of vetting for non-movers as well.

6. Force Risk & Governance – Deb Wilne via TEAMS

CK introduced DW and added that the new Committee is evolving in the way it works, with risk being a core of future meetings.

i. Governance Report including Strategic Risk Update

DW introduced the report, adding that it was a twice-yearly report and was last covered in February 2025. The report is a position statement indicating the significant amount of activity and progress that has been made over the course of that period.

The report sets out the terms of His Majesty's Inspection of Constabularies, Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS). Additionally, a key thing for Staffordshire is the Police Effectiveness Efficiency and Legitimacy Inspection (PEEL), there is a whole new rolling programme which has commenced for the 2025-2027 inspection. There have been some changes from the last PEEL framework. The 9 core questioning areas are laid out in the report.

There are a couple of areas to flag; Managing Fraud is a new area which has not been done as part of PEEL before, and the other element is providing a Safer Lawful Custody Environment. For assurance each of the core questions sits within a Chief Officer Portfolio. The team are docked in and looking at the whole inspection as one piece of work rather than in silos, which has been a new approach and appears to be paying dividends and getting a connected systems approach to how the Force is reviewing and preparing for the forthcoming inspection.

It is a continuous assessment approach from HMICFRS, and the Force is in the early stage of evidence gathering, the timeline for the inspection is in the document. There is also a chart setting out the progress in terms of the existing Areas for Improvement (AFI) and this illustrates that progress is being made in these areas.

The report also references the Child Protection Inspection. An inspection in 2021 indicated that improvement was required, this resulted in a full reinspection in 2023, and this summer a new inspection has been done. The Force is anticipating the new report reflecting the position in May 2025 will show a continued trajectory of sustained progress.

The Police Integrity inspection has replaced what would previously been considered in terms of vetting, Professional Standards and counter corruption inspections, which is a slightly different approach. There are currently no dates for this inspection, but this is being tracked and monitored in line with the programme approach for PEEL and through the oversight of the governance within.

The Serious and Organised Crime inspection of 2023 set out a number of AFI's, and the Force is currently working with HMICFRS to verify the consideration that these actions are now complete. HMICFRS are unable to send officers to validate this at present. The National Thematic report recommendations link has been shared for insight.

Regarding the Internal Audit reports and recommendations, since February the Force has archived four of the internal management plans, these have been formally signed off through the Internal Governance arrangements.

In relation to Strategic Risk Management, the risk register is discussed and presented at the Executive Management Board (EMB) chaired by the Chief Constable. Each risk on the register is assigned to a board for operational ownership, with each board led at Chief Officer level. The next EMB will be on 28th October to review, monitor and track the progress being made. Additionally, the Force risk register is shared with SCO and tabled at the Strategic Governance Board (SGB).

From Appendix Two there are 9 risks on the register with three risks that have been escalated since February; Transformation Realisation, Vetting which is seen as short term and the mitigations are being tracked and monitored closely, will be looking for that to be escalated down in new year. The third is Information Governance and mitigations have been put in place, the entire structure is being reviewed and tracked on monthly and continuous basis.

Cosford has been removed from the register and de-escalated to be managed as business as usual. Similarly, Sergeants' Resilience and Effectiveness has also been de-escalated from the register.

Q: CK thanked DW and confirmed the seriousness with which the Force takes internal audit reports is evident. Regarding risk, who decides when a risk is to be escalated, it would be good for the Committee to understand the process?

A: DW the escalation onto the Force register is done internally through an escalation process, set out in strategic risk management framework. The escalation could come from a number of areas, it could be escalated from command registers if it hits a threshold, or if it is maintaining trajectory in the wrong direction it is flagged through monitoring. Transformation Realisation was something that the Force had been monitoring from a scanning and environmental perspective through the National Risk Forum and through the National Police Chief's Council and is something that featured very heavily as a new risk on their National Register. Nothing is escalated on to or removed from the Strategic Risk Register without the authorization of the Chief Constable.

Q: CK thanked DW and added that the Committee have been presented with a report, three massive risks have been added to the register but there is no critique behind the reason for escalation. It would be good for the Committee to understand why these have been escalated. The Committee in discussion before the meeting talked about where the organisation is in relation to risk, and to enable an understanding of what has been done it would be good to understand the reason why and also to have some context around the escalation in the report.

EC added that some context on the escalation of risks would be really helpful, doesn't need to be full details, but information about which board it initially went to, when it went to EMB, how long it is anticipated to

remain on the register and for what reasons? The Committee is aware it has been through the process, but the context would be helpful for the Committee to understand. A time frame is helpful in audit terms and in monitoring the progress, and if something is not resolved. This is not meant as criticism, it is just a challenge and that's what the Audit Committee is meant to be doing, working with the organisations.

DW added that all the information is held and there are auditable records which can be pulled together, this is the first report of this nature to JARC, and this is how the report was presented before, but the Force is comfortable to work with the Committee, although there may be some elements that may not be able to be shared particularly in a public setting. The information around the when, where, why and timeframes can be added to the reports.

ACTION 3: For Additional Information to be added to the risk report to indicate the when, where and why a risk has been escalated, along with timeframes.

Q: LH with regard to the Transformation Realisation, we understand why it is on there, and it is really helpful to have this on the risk register in terms of it being visible, it supports the argument for wanting more funding and it helps senior decision makers when allocating funding. In the papers it was noticed that the Force has hit 80% of the savings target, taking on board the previous comments about the ring-fenced element, it doesn't actually give the Force a huge amount of scope to meet savings. How much of a risk does the Force think it is in finding the last bit of the savings target?

A: JB at this stage we don't know what funding we will get from government and what the precept levels will be, this won't be known until closer to December. There is a real risk around this, the government has published the spending review in terms of policing, but we do not know what the Home Office may top slice from the funding element. So, transformation becomes a real challenge and especially in realizing it at pace. The Force has had to go through a vacancy control process with police staff and over 100 posts being held vacant at present.

JB added that this is why Transformation is a risk. There is confidence now in the overall financial health positioning to deliver a balanced budget in the short term, and mitigation is in place. Over half of the budget is on police officer pay, and there are all the other things that officers need to do their jobs, vehicles, IT etc. these are all out of scope. In terms of a good and balanced budget, it will be a balanced budget but probably not a good budget due to the constraints.

ii. DRAFT AGS

The report covers off on the tables and the draft AGS, which was published on the Force website on the 30 June, in line with the statutory requirements. The Force articulated through this a continued improved position, particularly compared to the previous year and arguably year on year improvements that have been noted over the last number of years, particularly since the force was in engage, recognising there's still work to do, the Force has an ambition of returning to outstanding.

The AGS comes with credibility through the Forces' enhanced insight capability, and through validation through the inspection regime and internal and external audit. The evidence is there to back up the indications within the AGS.

The previous actions are referenced on Page 22 of the report and set out the mitigations that have been put in place around both of the actions. On the summary document there were three direct actions from the previous AGS, these are all now completed and signed off through the Internal Process. It is pleasing to note that other forces are now approaching Staffordshire to take on learning.

Section 6 of the AGS refers to the Forces' risk management process and framework. The document is absolutely aligned with the strategic planning and review process. The Force Management Statement is a key document

that sits alongside this document. For reassurance for the Committee the sign off for the draft report has been through the correct internal governance, in terms of Chief Officer Review.

Q: CK there are four pillars to becoming an outstanding organisation in the AGS, does that reflect the workload that is being undertaken, and do you think these are adequately covered by the risk management procedures? And do you have the capabilities and resources behind ensuring that we are outstanding? It is a challenge.

A: DW it is a challenge, but we are a Force that is aspiring on a journey to being outstanding, and the AGS reflects that journey, and in the wider context sets out where we've come from, where we are and where we want to be. Generally, it can give assurance of a significantly positive trajectory recognising there is work to press on with.

Q: CK this is a broader question but is the current leadership behind the AGS, and that there are no changes in priorities?

A: JB yes, the leadership is behind the AGS, however there is the pending Policing Reform White Paper which may mean resourcing is in different place.

Q: CB this is a question on the AGS Action 2 set from 24-25, to deliver increased productivity and efficiency through process improvements. I head up efficiencies at my organisation and we have to say how we are going to do this and set it out in swim lanes, this ensures that it's not just because we've stayed in budget but that we've also been efficient, because you can be in budget and not be efficient and vice versa. It would be interesting to understand how productivity and efficiency improvements are being tracked, and how you can demonstrate that, without just saying we've stayed within budget.

A: DW from a governance perspective we have an efficiency and change board that oversees the entire efficiency programme, so the tracking and monitoring is very much there and linked to the change piece. The Force is monitoring the benefits that are realised from that piece, and those benefits aren't just about reducing costs, those benefits are about increased productivity and making sure we are getting everything out of the innovative investments that have been made.

JB added this is a real focus personally and for the wider executive team. Staffordshire is 15th highest out of 43 Forces for levels of demand for service, and on a funding per person basis the level of funding is currently 7th lowest of the 43 Forces, this is a distinct mismatch. This brings a key strategic challenge for Staffordshire, you can't deliver a good service without improving efficiency, probably above and beyond what the average Force can deliver. There is more work to be done around tracking the benefits though. There is a revised benefits realisation strategy in place, and a new head of strategy has been appointed and in place for approx. six weeks.

Q: CB you have alluded to productivity, what are your big-ticket items to improve efficiency?

A: JB people instantly look at the technology route, but the actual review process before you get to technologies is key. There is also a culture piece around breaking down silos, but there is only so much that can be done as the Force has a lot of national standards set, and these constraints mean that you can't always be as efficient and effective as you want to be.

Technology is not always the solution, but we are looking to bring in some changes. In terms of public contact we are looking to bring in Agent Force, which is an AI bot, to talk to some low-level queries through the 101 lines. Automated document redaction is now in place; this was previously done manually and is now automated. The Force now uses Retrospective Facial Recognition, which saves time from manually reviewing images. There is a cost to technology, because of the ringfence we cannot cut police officer numbers, so technology may actually cost more as we cannot reduce the police officer numbers to fund the costs.

Q: CK just in reference to the statistics of being the 15th busiest Force, and to understand this how are the ratings determined?

A: JB it relates to calls to the service, Stoke has the highest number of children in care in the Country and these safeguarding needs also drive demand in Staffordshire. The Police Officers are really productive, they are arresting more people per officer than other forces, which is a good thing but the impact of that in terms of their workload demand and wellbeing is not healthy, so there are also some challenges there.

Q: LC – how does this statistic play out in the number of frontline officers for Staffordshire; do we have a higher level of frontline officers and less in back-office roles?

A: JB yes in roles that require a warrant card, but with police staff we are 6th or 7th lowest in numbers across the Country. Staffordshire has also seen the lowest increase in Council tax since 2012 which plays through into the piece around resourcing. From an efficiency point of view it indicates that the resources are in the right place.

Q: EC regarding the ringfenced numbers of warranted officers, are there any thoughts about whether this will happen again?

A JB it is still there; the Home Office measures two metrics. Staffordshire has an uplift number of 2002 officers, but this is based on a head count basis. There is also the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, and this is also counted but on an FTE basis. If the officer is not available for 28 days, then they do not count as a neighbourhood police officer and you cannot claim the money back from the government, despite having to pay their salary if they are off sick or on maternity leave, so it is quite confusing.

Q: EC so what is the baseline being used?

A: JB the baseline was who is in post at 31st March in a neighbourhood function. There were 8 PCSO's not classified as being in a neighbourhood function, due to maternity leave, sickness etc. so the salary costs are not being paid, they might now be back at work but because they were not in the census data then there is no funding for this.

There was further discussion around the fairness of this method for measuring the numbers and the potential for legal challenge and what pressures can be brought to government from the SCO and the Force, and more widely on a national level. The Commissioner and Senior Force Officers have been raising this through all the available routes, but it is a difficult environment, and different forces may also have different ideas around solutions that best suit their environment.

DE added that ministerial changes recently have also added to the complexity of the environment, the previous Policing Minister was giving assurances this would be reviewed but ministerial changes have affected this, and getting policing to punch weight in a political environment is a challenge.

JB added that in numbers of officers per 100,000 people Staffordshire is really low at 176, in neighbouring forces West Midlands have 271 and West Mercia 191, with Cheshire at 214. The only forces with lower numbers than Staffordshire are Hampshire, Wiltshire and Lincolnshire.

CK thanked DW for the reports and presentations.

7. SCO Risk & Governance – presented by LC

i. Governance Report

The report provides an update on the AGS with two actions which have been added. The first was to review the Audit Committee function, and a review of ETAP has been completed and the new JARC is now established. The second action was an agreement to strengthen the governance arrangements around Force and Fire, specifically around Transformation; there are now two meetings every three months, on a quarterly basis the focus is on finance, transformation, MTFS etc. and then a separate quarterly focus on performance. The process is well embedded, and the changes are starting to be seen.

A review of the Appropriate Adult (AA) service has been undertaken. There is a statutory requirement to provide an AA to all vulnerable adults and children in custody. Local Authorities have the responsibility for providing an AA to children, but there is no funding or guidance on who provides the service to vulnerable adults. The SCO currently provides the volunteer AA scheme for vulnerable adults in custody, and the office is currently considering a number of options, in the same way as the ETAP review, this will be brought back at a future meeting.

There is only one audit on the plan and this is currently on hold at the request of the SCO. The title of the audit was Commissioned Services, but the office is considering something broader in anticipation of the Local Government Reform and Devolution, there is also the National Police Reform and what that might mean for the office. There are discussions with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner ongoing about what the audit might be best utilised for.

ii. Strategic Risk Register Update

The document was shared on Huddle for the Committee to have sight of, but this is not in the public domain, due to the sensitivity of some of the elements. The SCO is currently reviewing the format for this.

The Director of Governance and Assurance left the organisation in December last year, and the office is about to welcome a new Director of Finance who will have overall responsibility for governance and assurance as well as finance. One of the first tasks will be to review the internal governance arrangements and how to manage the SCO Risk Register, and how the office reports to various boards, to ensure all of the processes and governance arrangements are in place.

Part of the wider update is about the capacity within the SCO. Key members of the team have been lost and there will be some changes in the next three months that cannot be shared at the moment, but from a staffing point of view the SCO is lean and is conscious that decisions have had to be made on prioritising work. Going forwards the SCO will be undertaking a review of the office function, the structure and making sure it is fit for purpose, taking on board the current financial pressures the MTFs and making sure that the SCO plays their part, but also with LGR and Devolution what that might mean for the future of the SCO and the roles within the office, ensuring it can retain and attract talent when needed, and that staff have the training, skills and expertise required for a transition to a mayoral structure at some point in the future.

Regarding the risk register, you will note that the future position is not yet on the risk register, this has been discussed by the Senior Leadership Team and with the Commissioner and Deputy, it has been flagged as an issue, and it will be appearing on the risk register going forwards.

There have been two risks added to the register, one around the funding settlement and the other around the deliverability of the MTFs, these are challenges and will remain on the register at this time.

Q: CB just picking up on the point of reviewing some of the processes and change, there was mention of a three-month time frame, was that right?

A: LC the new Director of Finance will start on the 20th October, and we will undertake a quick time review, certainly around the governance element, the risk register, and the responsibilities around the reporting mechanisms we have in place. Reviewing the wider function will take longer.

Q: CB so the initial process will take 3 months and then the wider functionality will be a longer process to be confirmed?

A: LC This is still in the process of scoping, but this will be brought back to the Committee. DE added that regarding the wider piece around LGR and Devolution, it is a larger time scale. The first new Mayors are coming online in May 2026, it will be interesting to watch how their offices merge into the Mayoral Office, and how the process actually works in terms of services on the ground and delivering for residents.

Essex is going to a Mayoral system, and they have a Police Fire and Crime Commissioner like Staffordshire, so will be an area to watch. Locally LGR is still uncertain, it is important that whilst the office needs to make sure it is ready it is balancing this with spending a lot of effort, time and money developing something that may well never exist. This is similar for the Mayoral system, the government's appetite for Mayors has diminished a little in recent weeks and months, but no doubt it will fire up again at some point.

LC added that the Police Fire and Crime Panel has new members, and the most recent meeting was held on Monday. The Panel asked some good questions and have changed the way they are operating, they are going

to be undertaking a review of the Panel function and make sure it is fit for purpose in the oversight they have over the Commissioner in his role of holding the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer to account, which is something to consider going forwards.

Q: EC asked about the time frames for this review

A: LC confirmed that the scoping was shared at Panel, a working group is being developed, and they were hopeful this would be done before Christmas.

EC added there are lots of functions that they do but the timing needs to take into account Precept which will be due around this time.

iii. Gifts & Hospitality Report

Q: CB there are a lot of unknown values when an offer is made but other forces, such as West Midlands, make an attempt to estimate the values. Is there any reason why Staffordshire has not estimated the values?

A: LC agreed to take this away to review.

ACTION 4: LC to review the reporting for Gifts & Hospitality regarding estimating the value for the offers made.

iv. SCO Verbal Update

This had been covered with the presentation of the other reports and there were no further questions around this.

8. AOB

There was no other business raised at this meeting. The JARC requested a brief closed meeting which was held straight after this meeting.

The date and time of next meeting:

Tuesday 25th November 2025 at 10:30am at Fire HQ