

Draft V03

**MINUTES OF THE ETHICS, TRANSPARENCY AND AUDIT PANEL (ETAP) POLICE
& CRIME MEETING held on Wednesday 23 November 2022
Conference Room 2, Block 7, Police HQ**

Present:

ETAP members	Officers
Bob Simpson (BS) Chair	Emma Barnett - Deputy Chief Constable (EB)
Craig Brown (CB)	John Bloomer – Force Director of Resources (JBL)
Chris Gill (CG)	Deb Wilne - Force Governance, Planning & Policy Manager (DW)
Emma Christmas (EC)	Jasraj Purewal - Force Chief Accountant (JP)
Jane Barr (JB)	Ralph Butler - SCO Head of Strategy & Change (RB)
Jane King (JK)	David Greensmith - SCO Director of Finance (DG)
John Wheatley (JW)	Louise Clayton - SCO Chief Executive (LC)
	Jean Cass - SCO Governance Lead (JC)
	Also in attendance
	Hassan Rohimun - EY Executive Director (HR)
	Umesh Lakhota - EY Auditors (UL)
	Angela Ward - RSM Audit Manager (AW)

SCO - Staffordshire Commissioner's Office

Force - Staffordshire Police Force

Prior to the meeting today, ETAP members had a private meeting with the Staffordshire Commissioner, followed by a member's pre-meeting.

Following the meeting today, Chris Noble (CN) gave members an update on the Police Operating Model and also DW gave an update on the Force's Governance model.

1. Chief Constable update

EB, gave the Panel today's update on behalf of the Chief Constable.

EB's update included the details of the Force's HMICFRS 'Engagement' work covered in the monthly Gold meetings. These meetings cover progress across two areas of concern, identification of vulnerability through the contact world and quality of investigations, progress against the Child protection improvement plan and the areas for improvements from the Peel Report. The next deadline is Tuesday 29th, when CN and the Commissioner attend the Police Performance Oversight Group (PPOG)., This meeting is chaired by the HMICFRS ad also attended by the Home Office and College of Policing. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the progress against the HMICFRS reports and future improvement plans of action for Staffordshire Police.

EB advised that the Force have introduced a triage system for the answering of calls. The Call Centre has recently seen performance improvements in the answering times for both 999 and 101 calls.

Other areas of investigation work, taking the ¹Baroness Casey's Report (interim findings) on the conclusions of current misconduct system, the Force are carrying out benchmark exercises. Looking at the timeliness of investigations, the Force has a current average of 78 days compared to the Met. Police average of 400 days. HMICFRS will visit Stafford HQ next week to conduct an inspection of vetting and counter fraud cases.

BS, commented that Vetting Team have recently briefed the Ethics and Review Panel (ERP).

JK added that ERP also had an update on the Force's updated Whistle Blowing Policy and the panel had recommended a flow chart would be helpful for all to understand the process flow contained within the policy.

BS commented that ERP were advised that Whistle Blowing had only been used once in the past few years other issues had been reported and resolved at a lower level

EB added that she wanted to have the confidence that all staff were aware of the Whistle Blowing Policy and how to report poor behaviour. The challenge is for all staff, the term that is used nationally, to be an 'upstander' rather than a 'bystander' and therefore to be able to point out poor behaviour.

Q: CB, do you find that is it more challenging dealing with older staff who have been with the Force longer than younger new recruits?

A: EB, actually the latest data suggests that it is younger staff that are coming to attention more often.

BS thanked EB for her update.

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

i. Declarations of Interest: None

Apologies: ETAP members Martyn Rochelle (MR) and Ben Thompson (BE) Sue Westacott and Sue Finney (SF). Victoria Farrar SCO Head of Governance & Assurance (VF), Chris Noble - Chief Constable (CN)

ii Minutes & actions of the meeting held on the 28 September 2022

Additional action (missed off the action log although properly recorded in the minutes) JK to scope terms of review overseeing the Force's AFIs work, send to BS and allocate an additional ETAP member to share this work- JK and JB have been allocated to take on this work - **complete**.

¹ [Baroness Casey's report on misconduct | Metropolitan Police](#)

AGREED - That the minutes of the meeting held on the 28 September 2022, was confirmed as an accurate and true record.

Updates to actions from previous meetings updated as per action log

Meeting date 25 May 2022

Action number 1, agenda item 1, BS has had discussions EB during their Sept meeting and plans for the next few months have been agreed - **complete**.

Action number 2, agenda item 5, EC has meet with Donna Harvey and worked through the Internal Audit Report titled Crime Recording. EC confirmed she gained assurances recommendations in the report are being met (within the actions addressing the HMICFRS reports) – **complete**.

Meeting date 26 July 2022

Action number 2, - Force's revised Gifts and Hospitality policy will be reviewed by ETAP's ERP meeting – **complete**.

Meeting date 28 Sept 2022

Action number 1 - Finance Panel has been sent the Internal Audit report on Crime Recording – **complete**.

Question from a member of the public

Q1 relates to item 2 'Action Plan' where it is stated "Finance Panel to review the Internal Audit report on Crime Recording." May I ask when will this internal audit report on crime recording be made available to the public? And will it form an agenda item at a future ETAP police public meeting like other internal audit reports?

A: BS, this report has been made available for Finance Panel members and has been reviewed by EC, Chair of the Finance Panel. Not all Internal Audit Reports are discussed at public meetings. The Crime Recording report was an advisory piece of work, not a compliance audit and this will not be made a public document

3. Deputy Chair's Feedback

i. Chair of the Finance Panel – Emma Christmas (EC)

No Finance Panel meetings have been held since the last ETAP meeting.

ii. Chair of the Ethics & Review Panel - Jane King (JK)

JK confirmed that her update report included: -

ETAP members MR and SF are currently working a review of the Force's Capital processes.

JB and JK will shortly undertake a review with Tracy Foster, from Professional Standards. This work will include validating the Forces work against the HMICRS areas for further improvements (AFIS) from the 2019 Peel Report.

Further planned work for ETAP in the Spring 2023, will include the dip sampling of vetting files as part of a follow to the HMICFRS inspection.

BS thanked JK for her report today.

4. Police, Fire and Crime Panel - (PFCP)

BS gave an updated on the latest PFCP meeting yesterday on the 24 October 2022.

The main item on the agenda was the update to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update for the Force. PFCP member were complementary on the report during the meeting, and did comment that it was appreciated how difficult it is to firm up on the financial projections due to a significant number of uncertainties and unknowns for the future.

ETAP member Chris Gill will be observing future PFCP meetings on behalf of ETAP members.

5. Chief Constable's Governance Report (DW)

DW presented the Chief Constable Governance update report which covered the following areas:

- i. HMICFRS Reports and Recommendations
- ii. Internal Audit Reports and Recommendations
- iii. External Audit Report and Recommendations
- iv. Strategic Risk and Issue Management
- v. Governance and Decision Making

Q: CB, page 5, looking at the risk associated with the national decommissioning of the Emergency Service Network (ESN) airways, what are the specific risks and costs with this item?

A: DW, this risk is set against a national context as it is a Home Office issue. There is an update at the full Force Exec Board meeting tomorrow.

JBL, added that the ESN, is managed by the Home Office and includes, Police, Fire and the NHS. The decommissioning ESN programme has been pushed back a number of times and work is now due at the end of the decade. The risks to the Force are minimal as the airways are resilient as a network. The Force is planning ahead compared to a number of other police forces by having purchased new headsets some time ago.

Q: CG, can I ask why the report includes, 5 areas of Accelerated Areas of Concern (ACOC) that are quoted as 'off track' where as there are 29 areas from the recent Peel report, released in September, which are stated as on 'track' Is this reflected of the Force's priorities?

A: DW, I note this point, the Force are currently working the College of Policing to help them make a fuller assessment in these 29 areas and some ACOC will be quick wins with less impactful elements. The off-track items are topics which are work in progress which still require agreed actions.

Q: JK, from the HMICFRS inspection report, has there been any areas of surprises?

A: EB, the Force was surprised with the findings of the Child Protection Inspection which were not as good as expected. Also, the Force challenged the some of the areas for further improvements (AFIs). The Force are now more confident that they have a greater understanding of their levels of understanding.

Questions from a member of the public

Q2 relates to Item 5, page 6, where it is stated "Currently introducing a Victims and Witnesses Board (C Supt Led, to ensure all activity is driving putting victims at the heart of what we do linking with wider Staffordshire Commissioner and partners boards also)." I cannot find any information on this Board on the police or commissioner's web site/in the public domain. Therefore: May I ask for more information to be made publicly available on the new Board? For example, terms of reference or equivalent showing membership, name of Chair, aims and objectives etc.

A: DW, these are currently all in draft, these are not posted routinely on the Force's website, but this can be considered when the information is confirmed.

6. SCO Governance Report (VF)

RB presented the report on behalf of VF as she has sent her apologies to the meeting,

Highlights of the reports included: -

- SCO ICVA Scheme Management and Compliance – this has been postponed until March/ April 2024 due to the national assessment by the ICVA that commenced in October 2022.
- Reports are due shortly for the internal audits for Pay Progression Standard and also Employer Responsibilities.
- The scope of ETAP's review of the Commissioner's Independent Scrutiny Panels, (CISP) is currently in progress.
- Work on the SCO's AGS is on track and the scoping work for this has begun.

Q: CB, can you confirm if the Internal Audit review of Employee Responsibilities Policy is still on track?

A: LC, there is a joint policy audit across the Force and SCO, this has been subject to some final tweaks following changes in the SCO and is due for finalisation shortly.

BS thanked RB for his update.

7. Medium Term Financial Strategy Update

DG presented a copy of his report, as previous presented to the PFCP panel meeting on the 24 October 2022. The PFCP report was well received and members acknowledged that it reflected challenging times ahead.

The report sets out, an update to current year's budget, an update to future years' MTFS assumptions, sensitivity analysis around key financial items and an update on Capital Programme.

Q: JW, what would the precept need to go up to bridge the MTFS gap?

A: JBL, to bridge the gap, the figure would be approx. 8%. Looking at the report since this has been written, there continues to be a real strong challenge from inflation, leased buildings and pay increases.

Q: CB, relating to the table in 1.9, flat pressure of £1.7m for gas, electricity and fuel, how do you maintain the pressures this?

A: JBL, the table is trying to show different things. Some fixed price deals are entered into to protect the Force from future increases.

Q: JW, is the 2% pressure just an assumption?

A: JBL, 2% is based upon the Bank of England rate. Gas prices have gone down at the moment. There are no certainties and the figures are based upon on Bank of England inflation rates. These figures will be revisited later on in the budgeting process.

CG added a comment, there is a big danger not knowing the costs going forward, with supporting the budget with use of reserves.

DG added that in the short term the Group, (the Force and SCO), will be using some reserves but this is not sustainable in to the medium term.

Q: CB, what can you do to stop inflation eroding the value of reserves?

A: JBL, nothing can be done, the reality is inflation grows, but you still have the cash in reserves at the end.

BS thanked JBL and DG for the report and their updates

8. Internal Auditors – RSM

i. Progress Report

AW advised that two final reports are issued today as detailed below: -

AW advised that is meeting Force Executive to review the remaining time in their Internal Audit Plan to see if RSM can help with the HMICFRS inspection work.

ii. Freedom of Information

Assurance Opinion – Substantial Assurance

Taking account of the issues identified, the Commissioner and the Chief Constable can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage the identified area are suitably designed, consistently applied and operating effectively.

iii. Corporate Resourcing Unit (CRU)

Assurance Opinion – Substantial Assurance

Taking account of the issues identified, the Chief Constable can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage the identified area are suitably designed, consistently applied and operating effectively.

Q: BS, does the report show where the Force is over resourcing?

A: EB, the CRU is a slightly difference process and not sure that the Force is over resourced anywhere.

BS thanked AW for her update and final reports

9. External Auditors – EY

HR presented the External Auditors detailed plan for the audit of the 2021/22 statutory accounts.

Q: CB, page 12, land and building, do you foresee any decline in the value? VFM risks, considering the HMICFRS review, will EY approach this?

A: HR, valuations will be made by the EY specialists. EY will be looking at what been discussed during the 'engaged' stage, the plans in place and correspondence level of satisfaction with progress made, as part of their VFM assessment.

Q, JW, will there be regular reviews of the timeline so that there are no surprises with the progress against the plan?

A, HR, EY are continuously looking at their resourcing in under to address the backlog, if this does have an impact on the timelines, EY will come back and provide update to ETAP.

Q: CG, in the plan on page 26, 3 people are earmarked to work on the audit, do you have any contingency if anything occurs to these three people?

A: HR, if any of these 3 key staff become unavailable for a significant period this will cause delays to the audit process, EY currently have no plans to back fill and EY would provide an update to ETAP of any required changes to the timetable set out in the audit plan.

BS thanked HR for his update.

AOB

Next and time of next meetings

Wednesday 22 February 2023 10.30 - 12.30

Wednesday 24 May 2023 10.30 - 12.30