

**MINUTES OF THE PCC ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY
16TH AUGUST 2022 AT 10:00 A.M. AT BRECKLAND COUNCIL, DEREHAM.**

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

In attendance:

Mr G Orpen-Smellie	Police and Crime Commissioner, OPCCN
Mr M Stokes	Chief Executive, OPCCN
Mr P Sanford	Chief Constable, Norfolk Constabulary
Mr S Megicks	Deputy Chief Constable, Norfolk Constabulary
Mr N Davison	Assistant Chief Constable, Norfolk Constabulary
Ms J Dean	Chief Superintendent, Norfolk Constabulary
Mr M Cooke	Superintendent, Norfolk Constabulary
Ms S Lister	Director of Performance and Scrutiny, OPCCN
Mr J Stone	Head of Performance and Scrutiny, OPCCN
Mr D Neave	Performance and Scrutiny Assistant, OPCCN
Ms G Wreford	Head of Finance, Norfolk Constabulary

Apologies for absence:

Ms J Penn	Chief Finance Officer, OPCCN
Ms H Johns	Communications Manager, OPCCN
Dr G Thompson	Director of Policy, Commissioning and Communications, OPCCN
Ms N Atter	Corporate News Manager, Norfolk Constabulary
Mr P Jasper	Assistant Chief Officer, Norfolk Constabulary
Mr E Bridger	Temporary Assistant Chief Constable, Norfolk Constabulary

Before addressing the agenda items, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) thanked members of the public for attending, thanked Breckland Council for hosting and thanked all those that worked on creating the papers.

The PCC apologised for the postponement of this meeting from the 3rd of August due to illness. The PCC explained the purpose of this meeting is to hold the Chief Constable to account for the policing service delivered in the county and the public setting allows for further transparency in doing so.

2. Declarations of Personal and/or Prejudicial Interests

There were none declared.

3. To Confirm the Minutes of the Meeting Held on the 3rd of May 2022

The minutes were confirmed with no objections. There were no actions to be completed from the last meeting.

4. PAM Public Questions

Q1) A resident from the King's Lynn area stated that she understands it's illegal to use an electric scooter on public roads, yet when walking around the Wootton area she sees an increasing number of these machines being used. She states that the users are a danger to themselves and a danger to walkers, cyclists and families using the cycle paths and recreational spaces. What are the Police currently doing in relation to this activity?

The Chief Constable (CC) recognised that it is an issue across the county and that there is public confusion on what can and can't be done regarding e-scooters. In places like Norwich, there are trials where scooters can be hired and legally rode. However, privately owned e-scooter cannot.

The CC explained there have been national campaigns to improve understanding by the Constabulary and the National Police Chiefs Council. Warnings and enforcement have been completed by the Constabulary; however, a major issue is that they can be bought by people who don't know the rules in place.

Norfolk Constabulary stop people regularly on e-scooters, individuals provide their details, and if it is their first time being stopped and they were simply unaware of the law, they are advised and told to walk the scooter home. On a second stop, enforcement takes place, the scooter is seized, and they may be subject to a range of traffic offences.

In the Kings Lynn area, local Beat Managers have been visiting retailers to ensure guidance on the laws around e-scooters is understood and that potential customers are being made aware of the law. The CC expects that legislation will change around e-

scooters as he suspects they will become more frequently used.

Q2) A member of the public is seeking some reassurances around shotgun licenses. She states that simply extending shotgun licenses, even short term, means that the necessary scrutiny and health checks are not being undertaken in a timely manner. She asks what is being done to reduce the backlog in renewing shotgun licences in Norfolk and when the expected backlog will be eliminated?

The CC confirmed there is a backlog which is partly due to Covid and the sheer volume of firearms across Norfolk and Suffolk, with 45,000 licenses being issued. It is also due to the cost of administering the scheme which is subsidised by Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies as the administration costs more than the licence fees. The backlog is also partially due to delays from medical professionals who are required to provide certificates. The Constabulary is managing this risk by prioritising those who already have firearms, rather than those who are applying for new licences.

The Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) explained that although they do not have the exact figure of the backlog as it changes regularly, it is between 0.1%-0.3% of the total licences issued across Norfolk and Suffolk. The Constabulary carefully manages the risks around firearms and there are mechanisms in place including daily risk assessment checks. If the Constabulary has concerns about the holder of the firearm, then the firearm will be seized.

The CC confirmed that the intention for the backlog is zero. This is something that could be achieved more quickly, however, it would mean resources such as front-line officers that are needed elsewhere are moved into this area.

Q3) The PCC had a question relating to knives and the reports in local papers about stabbings in Norwich. Is violence in Norwich increasing, should the public be concerned and what is the Constabulary doing to get on top of this?

The CC recognised that in the past few weeks there has been media attention on this issue and that the Constabulary didn't have the opportunity to set out what happened. All those involved in the stabbings knew each other and had existing grievances; these are not random attacks and the risk to the public is no higher now than it has been in the past. Although violent crime statistics may have risen, this is mainly driven by changes in recording rules and better recording. As a result, one incident may have multiple crimes recorded. The three main reasons for violent crimes being recorded are domestic violence, supply of illegal drugs and alcohol consumption.

The PCC questioned whether perceptions of violent crime have changed. The CC conceded that it is a challenge to ensure balanced stories are published and stated that although there is a good relationship between the Constabulary press office and local media, there are timescale pressures where the media want information to be shared quickly and clarity on what has happened could be missed.

Q4) The PCC had a question relating to sustaining community policing during the summer period, particularly in rural districts like North Norfolk. There are concerns that Beat Officers are abstracted for response roles, what can be done to fix this problem?

The CC confirmed that the Constabulary is made up of 1,800 officers and Norfolk is halfway through training 224 new Police Officers as part of the Governments pledge of recruiting 20,000 more officers nationally across all forces. This takes the numbers back to pre-austerity levels; however, Police Staff numbers are still below previous levels and training of new Police Officers takes time.

On any given shift there are usually 60-65 response officers on duty, but they can be assisted by others including firearms and traffic officers. The population of the county increases during the summer months with tourists and this July saw the highest monthly volumes of 999 calls ever. Many of these calls are not traditional police calls with an increasing number being mental health related or requests to assist other agencies, such as the Ambulance Service.

The Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) added that there is an Operational Planning Group and a Resource Management Unit that manages and anticipates where demand and resources are needed. A principal rule is the abstraction of Beat Managers is to be a last resort, and abstraction to a response role is only 1.5% during the summer. Local neighbourhood Sergeants and Inspectors also work with Beat Managers to ensure that time and resources are allocated correctly.

The PCC followed up with a question about 999 and 101 call times.

The CC explained that the same staff members answer both 999 and 101 calls. They prioritise 999 calls which have increased considerably over the last two years. This has an impact on 101 calls wait times; however, 90% of 101 calls are answered within 14 minutes. While the CC wishes for call answering times to be reduced, Norfolk Constabulary statistics are better than many other forces and other public services.

With the recent precept funding, there have been additional resources added to the Control Room to enhance the switchboard. The average time for calls to be answered is 26 seconds and allows for efficient diversions to other services. The DCC added that the switchboard undertakes a risk assessment to appropriately channel the call and, if appropriate, be reallocated to 999. Shift patterns of call takers are to be adjusted in the near future to better reflect patterns of call demand.

5. Police, Crime & Community Safety Plan 2022-24: 'Sustain Norfolk Constabulary'

The PCC stated that the Police Officer pay award is 5% and Police Staff pay is likely to be renegotiated. He asked that if staff costs amount to 86% of the Constabulary budget, how does the CC plan to absorb such an increase?

The CC welcomed the increase as it ensures pay remains competitive, however he explained that paying for this is very difficult. The Constabulary budgeted for a 3% increase, so tough decisions are needed, although it is too early to say what specific decisions will be made. In addition to this, inflation in relation to areas such as fuel costs has increased and quotes on contracts with suppliers have increased too.

The PCC noted the pay increase will be on 1st September and that the Constabulary currently does not know what the budget will be for next year. The CC acknowledged this and made clear that a police service will remain and meet the challenges, however, he repeated that difficult decisions are needed. The PCC explained that he has a meeting with the Minister for Crime and Policing and budgeting will be a topic discussed.

The PCC asked for an update on plans for the rest of the Uplift Programme. He asked if the Constabulary could be looking at a scenario where they have to cut Police Officer recruitment and take the financial penalty for this by the Home Office?

The CC explained that it is difficult to form a view as the financial penalties are not known. Once the penalties are known, a decision can be made on how taxpayers' money is best spent.

The DCC stated that recruitment is now operating under the Police Education Qualification Framework and that the delay in doing this was to allow the Constabulary to learn from other forces. It was explained that there are two entry streams with 68 recruits in the degree-holder stream and 64 recruits in the degree apprenticeship stream. The DCC confirmed that the force is continually advertising and is confident the target of 224 new officers can be met.

6. Police, Crime & Community Safety Plan 2022-24: 'Visible and Trusted Policing'

The PCC stated Safer Neighbourhood Action Panels (SNAP) are part of the Constabulary's engagement with the community. Face-to-face meetings shut down due to Covid restrictions, so the PCC asked if the Constabulary is reintroducing face-to-face meetings or looking at a hybrid approach?

The ACC confirmed that the Constabulary is moving to a hybrid approach. During Covid, online meetings were set up and now there will be a mix of face-to-face meetings in local communities and offering online viewings. 75% of SNAP meetings are currently hybrid and the Constabulary is aiming for all these meetings to be hybrid to increase participation.

The PCC commented that he often receives requests for Police Officers to attend local Parish Council meetings. He recognised that this would take up a lot of time and resources, so he will push back and suggest people attend SNAP meetings instead.

7. Police, Crime & Community Safety Plan 2022-24: 'Tackling Crime'

The PCC asked about media articles analysing the disproportionality of ethnic minority groups

being stopped and searched. The PCC asked why this is the case, whether is it an issue in Norfolk and what can be done about this?

The ACC acknowledged that disproportionality exists and referred to the Lammy Review. In terms of disproportionality in Norfolk, the upcoming Census data will have an impact on statistics as it is expected to show that the local ethnic minority population has increased. 'County Lines' is the main driver of stop and search disproportionately in Norfolk as this is used carefully as a response to this criminality. The ACC explained that some vulnerable Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, who do not reside in Norfolk, visit Norfolk from other areas. The DCC added that the Constabulary considers the community consequences and engages with the Race Action Plan as well as working with the Black Police Association to reflect on practices. The DCC pointed out the amount of training completed with officers, which includes training with external groups. This training ensures that officers in the Constabulary remain up to date with training regarding disproportionality.

The PCC asked if there have been any issues arising from the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) reports on stop and search?

The DCC commented that body-worn video is viewed for audit and there is nothing of great concern coming up. The ACC added that when viewing the videos, the clips show stop and search is almost always done very well as it shows officers explaining the grounds and showing respect. He commented that the written reports by Police Officers carrying out the stop could be improved; however, a new refresher programme is being produced and auditing is taking place.

The PCC asked what domestic abuse training for officers has been put in place?

The DCC outlined some of the significant training available and explained there are often training days for officers. There is a huge number of checklists and aide memoirs that have been created for officers through Operation Investigate. The ACC added that the amount of training has massively increased in the last 30 years. Chief Superintendent (Ch/Supt) Dean explained that all the training discussed is available online for officers and they can access it at any time. The PCC recognised the amount of learning asked of officers is large. The CC raised his concerns that although all training is best-intentioned, the amount of training can needlessly complicate some things.

The meeting had a short break and reconvened at 11:35hrs.

8. Police, Crime & Community Safety Plan 2022-24: 'Prevent Offending'

The PCC asked the Constabulary to outline its work on anti-slavery and queried what the scale of the problem is?

Ch/Supt Dean explained that there is a Modern Slavery Coordinator and a Multi-Slavery

Detective Sergeant who helped to establish the Norfolk Anti-Slavery Network.

The PCC asked for a definition of what is meant by slavery?

Ch/Supt Dean stated it has a wide definition including sex work and domestic servitude. The PCC asked about the scale of the problem, however Ch/Supt Dean explained it is very difficult to say as they can't provide an exact number. It is agreed, however, that it is increasing in volume. The DCC concluded that many difficulties exist; for example, some victims do not see themselves as victims and others are so controlled that they are not able to access support or report crimes.

The PCC asked if it is a growing problem post Brexit?

The CC explained that there may not be connections to Brexit, however, we are currently in an environment where cases will increase. This is due to the difficult economic times ahead and the willingness of consumers to pay less for services.

9. Police, Crime & Community Safety Plan 2022-24: 'Support Victims'

The PCC asked what the impact is on witnesses, and victims due to the delays in waiting for court appearances. He commented that the report states workloads for Witness Care Officers have increased by 65% nationally and asked how the picture looks in Norfolk?

Ch/Supt Dean explained the Witness Care Unit is a joint unit with Suffolk Constabulary and thus it's difficult to give Norfolk only details. She explained however that the unit is managing 392 Crown Court cases, 407 not guilty anticipated pleas at Magistrates Court, and 656 guilty anticipated pleas at Magistrates Court. The workload increase in Norfolk is similar to the 65% increase experienced nationally which has caused a real challenge, especially on Friday afternoons. Delays have had a massive impact on witnesses and victims, and it is anticipated that levels will return to pre-Covid levels in 2025.

The PCC noted that the Witness Care Officers might get the blame whenever there are delays. Ch/Supt Dean agreed and explained that the barrister strikes have, and will continue to have, an impact on delays and that victims' and witnesses' lives are put on hold.

The PCC voiced his frustrations with the delays and victims who are being let down. The CC agreed and noted that there is now a growing number of rape and serious sexual offences being reported and delays at court are having a massive impact on people. The PCC expressed his wish for a Nightingale court option to be put in as a possible solution but conceded this is unlikely to happen.

10. Police, Crime & Community Safety Plan 2022-24: 'Safer and Stronger Communities'

The PCC reviewed data from the reports and noted it is encouraging to see so many offences

decreasing. However, he expressed his concern that solved rates are also going down.

The ACC explained that although it is the Constabulary's mission to solve crime, some of the challenges the force faces have already been discussed today. It was explained that National Crime Recording Standards have changed in recent years which means Norfolk Constabulary is recording more crime than previously which has had an impact on the solved rate figures. Many crimes today have a digital aspect that complicates investigations and some of these are out of the Constabulary's jurisdiction. The ACC also explained that the workforce is now less experienced, due to there being a younger workforce overall, and that there is a national shortage in detectives.

Some solutions outlined include Operation Solve, Operation Investigate, Operation Discovery who are piloting new ideas in the west of Norfolk and resources being put into digital investigators.

The PCC noted the current political leadership contest and pointed out upcoming potential political pressure on burglary investigations. The CC explained that it would not be possible to attend every burglary with Forensics, however, every crime would be assessed to determine if it would be appropriate to attend. The CC highlighted that the best use of policing resources is required and gave an example whereby someone walking into an unlocked home and stealing a low-value item should not be treated by Forensics Services as more urgent than other crimes. The use of Forensic Services is always assessed on whether the chance of a positive forensic hit is possible.

The CC explained that there is political and media pressure to deal with traditional crimes but noted the amount of non-crimes police are currently dealing with, including calls and demands related to mental health issues and the Ambulance Service.

The PCC asked how the Norfolk and Suffolk Mental Health Trust are doing and what the Constabulary is having to do to help them?

The ACC raised his concerns about the number of people in the community in a mental health crisis. There is currently an impact on policing due to the number of people arrested who appear in custody with clear mental health concerns, and he highlighted the findings in the report which show 109 people have been detained under the Mental Health Act in custody in the last twelve months compared to 91 people in the previous year. The ACC explained that there is a shortage of mental health beds which means that people are having to stay in custody for extended periods of time while waiting for a bed to become free. These people need to be monitored which results in custody staff and Police Officers having to be abstracted from other duties. The ACC explained that officers are also finding that once they have detained someone under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act, they are spending a considerable amount of time waiting for a bed to be available at one of the mental health suites.

The Constabulary has a mental health Inspector and support of mental health nurses embedded in the control room who can provide guidance and support to officers. The ACC

made clear that the main problem is still a lack of beds and staff at the Trust. Although the Trust recognises this and has a plan, it will not be resolved in the short term.

The PCC shared positive news he had been hearing from others about the police response to the recent fires in Norfolk. He requested that the Constabulary comment on the resourcing pressures it caused.

The CC stated that the most challenging day was the week beginning the 16th of July with major fires in multiple locations across Norfolk. The CC thanked the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and stated that in all incidents there needed to be a police presence, whether it be shutting down roads or getting residents to safety.

The CC wished to put on record all the good work of those involved in dealing with these incidents but wanted special recognition for the officers who dealt with the fires in Ashhill. It is the CC's belief that those who attended these fires saved lives. The DCC also commented that unfortunately there are also ongoing criminal investigations on the back of the heatwave and gave an example of an off-duty officer discovering two men deliberately starting fires in the west of the county.

11. Emerging Operational/Organisational Risks

It was agreed that all the emerging risks had been discussed in the meeting, with the main risk being the ever-increasing operational demand and challenging financial climate.

12. AOB

There was nothing discussed under AOB.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 25th October 2022 at a venue to be confirmed.



Giles Orpen-Smellie
Police and Crime Commissioner



Paul Sanford
Chief Constable