



Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

Panel Report on the PCC's Annual Report 2022/23

On 6 October 2023, the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel (PCP) considered the Annual Report of the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for 2022/23. The Panel has a statutory role in scrutinising this report at a meeting held in public.

The meeting was held in the Elisabeth Frink Room, Endeavour House, and 9 of the 13 members of the Panel were present. The PCC was accompanied by the Head of Communications and Engagement and Head of Policy and Performance from the Office of the PCC (OPCC). The [agenda and papers](#) from the meeting are available on the County Council's website.

The Annual Report provided Members with an update on the work undertaken by the PCC during the financial year 2022/23, including updates on the PCC's delivery of the objectives in his [Police and Crime Plan 2022-2025](#), the PCC's commissioning of services to support victims and reduce crime, and consultation and engagement activities.

The PCC, in presenting his report, highlighted the progress made by the Constabulary over the previous year against a background of being one of the lowest funded forces in the country, but with a large geographical area to cover.

Whilst Suffolk was one of the safest counties in the country, this was no reason to become complacent, and there were areas where performance could be improved, for example relating to serious sexual offences.

The PCC also referred to his commissioning activity over the past year, in particular for victims of domestic abuse and tackling the damaging effects this has on children. The PCC referred to the continuing change in the pattern of crime, with more online crime and hidden harm, and resources had been directed into the cyber unit to assist in tackling this growing area of crime, which was often not visible to the public.

Successful applications had been submitted over the past year for Government initiatives, including the Safer Streets Fund, and the PCC was waiting to hear the outcome of a further funding application.

Good progress had been made on county lines, achieved via a multi-agency approach, and funding from Suffolk Public Sector Leaders had made a significant difference to the ability to tackle this crime.

Other initiatives the PCC was involved in included the Government's drugs strategy, "Harm to Hope", and continuing collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary, which had achieved savings without compromising county policing. Investment into the Contact and Control Room could also be seen to be making a difference.

The PCC referred to one of the main stories from the last year, the increase in officer numbers, which had been achieved largely through the Government's funding for 179 additional officers via the uplift programme. However, the total number of additional officers being recruited was 200, as Suffolk had been able to pick up some slack from other forces which had not recruited their full allocation of officers. Increases in the

Council Tax Precept over the past three years had also funded 53 further officers and 70 staff, including digital forensic support staff.

Demand on the police continued to rapidly increase, as did demand for the PCC's commissioning services and support provided to victims, and the PCC paid tribute to the work of the voluntary and charitable sector, saying that Suffolk would be in much worse position without the hard work put in by local communities.

Finally the PCC advised that the conclusion of the joint estates work with Suffolk Fire and Rescue had been reached, with the opening of the significant development in Princes Street, Ipswich, and the completion of the new build joint police and fire station in Stowmarket. It was hoped that ultimately the ambulance service would also be based there.

In response to a question as to the monetary value of joint working with the Fire and Rescue Service, the PCC advised that this was joint sharing of premises rather than operational work, but that he would estimate the cost saving to be at least £70-80k per organisation. Concerning the potential for further partnership working and savings, the PCC advised that collaboration opportunities were always being sought.

Concerning the uplift of 200 officers, the PCC advised that officers followed a 3-year training course, and fully trained officers would start to come through towards the end of this financial year and the beginning of the next. The Constabulary was required to keep the base level at 1,400 officers in order to retain the additional funding, so an ongoing robust recruitment policy was essential.

A member referred to the core statutory duties of the PCC, and asked whether there had been any increase in statutory or other initiatives which were unfunded. In response, the PCC advised that additional work had been absorbed by the team, for example on the Safer Streets Fund, criminal justice support and the administration of the Serious Violence Duty. The PCC was due to meet with the Home Secretary later in the month, and would be discussing this issue at the meeting, as well as the decrease in the OPCC's budget whilst its responsibilities had increased, for example for victims commissioning. The PCC's office, which was one of the smallest teams in the country, was looking to increase its capacity to cope with this additional demand, which could have an impact on the precept, unless additional resources could be obtained from the Government. Lobbying of the Government was also undertaken by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

Concerning the Police and Crime Plan 2022-2025, a Member asked whether there was scope to change the Plan within that period to reflect changing priorities and patterns of crime. The PCC responded that the Plan could be changed if required, however its wording, particularly in Objective 1 which covered visibility and response, was deliberately broad so that regular changes should not be necessary. Additionally, each Objective in the Plan had a number of activities listed which were required to achieve it, and these were monitored via the PCC's Performance Framework and meetings of the Accountability and Performance Panel. The Chief Constable's operational plan also showed how the Constabulary would achieve the objectives of the Plan, and should be referred to alongside it.

In response to a question on the closure of the public desk at Sudbury Police Station, the PCC responded that 16 police station front desks had been closed, based on evidence of the numbers of people visiting them. This had saved hundreds of

thousands of pounds per year, which could be invested into other areas. The PCC was also confident that the new county policing model, which was the subject of this Autumn's round of public engagement meetings, would make a considerable impact on public confidence. The PCC undertook to keep ward members informed of any progress related to Sudbury in particular.

The Chairman asked the PCC how he helped the public to understand the role of the PCC. The PCC responded that this was done in a number of ways including public meetings, documentation, social media, speaking engagements, grants work and TV and radio interviews, and that he was always looking to find ways to raise the profile of the PCC's role. He was confident that the public was more aware of the role of the PCC than when PCCs were first introduced, but he was always open to ideas as to how this could be further improved, for example by speaking to groups of villages/ward areas, district/borough councils and area committees.

Concerning communication, a member suggested a review of the language used to reduce jargon. Additionally, the member felt that comparison information with other similar forces would be useful, as well as detail of the national picture, to give context to the information presented. The PCC replied that he would look at this, but that direct comparison was not always helpful as it did not necessarily take into account available resources or size of force. Additionally, there was a significant amount of data available, and this would need to be condensed into that which was most useful. The PCC also referred to the Constabulary's Force Management Statement which looked at gaps in provision.

The Panel thanked the PCC for outlining the range of work which took place across Suffolk during the period of his Annual Report to meet the objectives set out in his Police and Crime Plan.

Decision of the Panel

The Panel, having reviewed the PCC's Annual Report for 2022/23:

- a) noted the PCC's Report;
- b) asked that the PCC update the Panel on an annual basis on any additional unfunded burdens placed on his team, and the success or otherwise of any applications to the Home Office for funding to enable the PCC's office to undertake that additional work without needing to increase the precept; and
- c) delegated the production and publication of the Panel's formal report on its scrutiny of the PCC's Annual Report to the Chairman of the Panel.

Councillor Sarah Mansel



Chairman of the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

6 October 2023