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**SUBJECT: CHIEF CONSTABLE OF SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY'S DRAFT ANNUAL
GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2025/26**

Summary

1. The Audit Committee is required to consider the corporate governance arrangements for the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable, which includes reviewing their Annual Governance Statements.
2. The draft Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 for the Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary is presented at appendix A for consideration.
3. The statement contains a review of the Chief Constable's governance arrangements and their effectiveness including the systems of internal control and risk management and reports on any significant governance issues during the year.
4. The final Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 accompanies publication of the Chief Constable's Statement of Accounts 2025/26 and will be published following audit and approval of the accounts.

Recommendation

1. The Audit Committee is requested to consider the Chief Constable's draft Annual Governance Statement 2025/26.



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2025/26 FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

1. INTRODUCTION

The draft Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 covers the financial year 2025/26 and plans for the financial year 2026/27 and reflects the position up to 1 May 2026.

2. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Constable is responsible for ensuring that the Constabulary's business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Chief Constable is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of the Constabulary's affairs and facilitating the exercise of its functions, which includes ensuring there is a sound system of governance incorporating the system of internal control, which is maintained throughout the year and that arrangements are in place for the management of risk.

The Chief Constable's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) *Statement on the Role of the Chief Finance Officer of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Finance Officer of the Chief Constable*.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with CIPFA's *Delivering Good Governance: Guidance Notes for Policing Bodies in England and Wales*. A copy is available on the PCC's website www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk or can be obtained from Suffolk Constabulary, Police Headquarters, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich, IP5 3QS.

This statement explains how the Chief Constable has complied with the Code of Corporate Governance and also meets the requirements set out in the *Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 6(1)* to review the effectiveness of the system of internal controls and prepare an annual governance statement.

3. PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values by which the Chief Constable directs and controls activities through which she accounts to

and engages with the community. It enables her to monitor the achievement of the Constabulary's strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services, including achieving value for money.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Chief Constable's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised and to manage them effectively, efficiently, and economically.

The governance framework has been in place for the Chief Constable for the year ended 31 March 2026 and up to the date of approval of the statement of accounts.

4. THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The Chief Constable is responsible for operational policing matters, having direction and control over the Constabulary's police officers and police staff, and is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the effective governance of the Constabulary and a sound system of internal controls that supports the achievement of the Constabulary's policies, aims and objectives. She has day-to-day responsibility for the Constabulary's financial management set within a framework of an agreed budget allocation and authorisation levels issued by the PCC and is held to account by the PCC.

The following section describes the governance arrangements and the supporting systems and processes in place for the Constabulary.

4.1 Governance Arrangements

Accountability and Performance Panel

- The PCC chairs the Accountability and Performance Panel. It is a public meeting, and its purpose is to hold the Chief Constable to account and to enable issues to be discussed and, where appropriate, make decisions. This includes holding the Chief Constable to account for the management of the funds provided to her for the purpose of policing and the delivery of the strategy and objectives set out in the police and crime plan.

Audit Committee

- The purpose of the Audit Committee is to provide independent advice and recommendations to the PCC and the Chief Constable on the adequacy of the governance and risk management frameworks, the internal control environment, and

financial reporting, thereby helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

- The Audit Committee takes assurance from inspections conducted on the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Constabulary from a number of sources that include internal audit, external audit and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). An annual report of the Committee's activities is available on the PCC's website.

Chief Officer Team

- The Chief Officer Team meets weekly at the Chief Officer Management Group to monitor, review, and give chief officer-level direction for key strategic issues and to enable coordination across the organisation for the delivery of key strategic and operational objectives.
- Chief Officer governance and management is undertaken through attendance at the Accountability and Performance Panel meetings and by chairing various internal meetings. These include the Joint Chief Officer Team meetings; the Transformation and Change Board; and the Performance Group.
- Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies and Chief Officer Teams collaborate extensively. The Programme Management Office oversee all collaborative activities on a day-to-day basis, monitor progress against the agreed programme and report upwards into the Transformation and Change Board and onwards to the Joint Chief Officer Team and the Suffolk and Norfolk PCCs.
- Senior operational and non-operational managers support the Chief Officer Team.

4.2 Planning

The Police and Crime Plan 2025/2029, which has applied from 1 April 2025, presents the PCC's police and crime objectives. These have been translated into an activity plan that drives day-to-day work with progress monitored under the PCC's Police and Crime Plan Performance Framework 2025/2029. A plan outlining specific actions, timescales and milestones has been produced that drives delivery by the Constabulary.

There are coordinated processes for strategic and financial planning. These consider policing priorities at local, regional, and national levels; risks; efficiency savings; value for money principles; and financial resilience criteria. The work involves consulting with officers and staff across the Constabulary and a process of scrutiny and challenge by Chief Officers to ensure that the plan reflects the strategic aims of the Chief Constable and the PCC. The Chief Constable's Delivery Plan 2023/28 was launched in May 2023 and sets out the Constabulary's vision, mission, values and priorities for 2023/24 to 2027/28. A copy of this plan is available on the Constabulary's website. This is supported by the Medium-Term

Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2029/30 and annual balanced budget for 2026/27 that was approved by the PCC on 19 January 2026.

4.3 Performance Management

There is a Constabulary performance management framework. Objectives and performance indicators are established and monitored both at a Constabulary and local policing-area level. Reports are provided regularly to senior managers, the Chief Officer Team and to the PCC on performance against objectives.

4.4 Public Confidence and Satisfaction

The Constabulary measures the satisfaction of service users through the use of victim surveys. Levels of victim satisfaction are monitored through the Constabulary's regular performance meetings and a Public Confidence Board that meets bi-monthly to set the strategic direction and oversee the work focussed on increasing public confidence and satisfaction in policing services in Suffolk. The Constabulary reports regularly to the PCC on levels of satisfaction as one of his agreed police and crime plan's objectives and reviews public confidence through the annual Crime Survey for England and Wales published by the Office of National Statistics.

4.5 Internal Control and Compliance

The roles and responsibilities of senior officers within the Constabulary are established by a scheme of governance and consent, financial regulations, common law, legislative requirements, and police officer and police staff role profiles.

Scheme of Governance and Consent

- The PCC has adopted a scheme of governance and consent, including financial regulations, contract standing orders, and various codes of practice as part of his governance arrangements. They are reviewed periodically in accordance with requirements and copies are available on the PCC's website. The Constabulary has to adhere to requirements contained in these documents and that form a core part of the governance framework.

Risk Management

- Both the PCC and the Chief Constable maintain strategic risk registers that are regularly reviewed. Risk management policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the risks facing the PCC and Chief Constable in achieving objectives are identified, evaluated, and reported.
- A Joint Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies' risk management policy includes details of the risk management framework for Suffolk Constabulary. The policy supports a risk

management approach for ensuring that strategic objectives are achieved and shows how risk is dealt with by mitigation and/ or escalation to the appropriate level within the Constabulary.

- All legal requirements for insurance were met, and insurance policies were reviewed as necessary as part of agreed regional consortium arrangements.

Fraud

- The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy sets out the required standards of behaviour for police officers and police staff to follow. Fraud is deterred through the application of policies and procedures, through regular internal audits, vetting of police officers and police staff and a whistleblowing policy. The policy includes processes for identifying and responding to fraud. The Constabulary's internal auditor or its Anti-Corruption Unit may investigate allegations of fraud.
- Financial Regulations set out the requirement for internal financial controls, including the approach to preventing fraud and non-compliance, together with the arrangements for dealing with suspected fraud, theft, irregularity and improper use or misappropriation of property or resources.
- The Constabulary's intranet is used to inform police officers and police staff of their responsibilities relating to fraud, ethical behaviour, and other related matters and of the training that is available to them.

Code of Ethics

- The Code of Ethics, published by the College of Policing, describes the principles that every member of the policing service in England and Wales is expected to uphold and the standards of behaviour they are expected to meet. This Code applies to all those who work for the Constabulary, be they police officers, staff, contractors, or volunteers and is embedded throughout the organisation.
- An ethics committee allows police officers and police staff to raise ethical issues affecting the Constabulary and an integrity board ensures the fair application of policy and process. Breaches of the Code of Ethics or standards of professional behaviour are investigated by the Joint Professional Standards Department in accordance with Police Regulations.

4.6 AI Governance and Cyber Security

In accordance with the NPCC Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy and the Covenant for Using AI in Policing, the Constabulary has established robust governance and assurance arrangements to ensure that artificial intelligence and digital technologies are deployed lawfully, securely, ethically, and transparently.

Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies have a joint AI policy and a DCC-chaired AI governance board. All AI-enabled systems are subject to formal responsible AI risk assessment, recorded within a local transparency framework, aligned to national Police.AI standards, and operated under a clear human-in-the-loop principle. Governance prohibits 'public' generative AI for police data requiring all data processing remains within secure, audited tenants rather than the public cloud.

In parallel, cyber security and resilience are embedded within the Constabulary's strategic risk register. Ongoing compliance is maintained against the National Cyber Security Centre Cyber Assessment Framework for Policing, applied locally by the Police Digital Service (PDS) through the Security Assessment for Policing. This is overseen by the Constabularies' Joint Information Security Department, working in partnership with a PDS cyber assurance specialist, and is reinforced by third-party supply-chain assurance, together with clear escalation and reporting arrangements for significant cyber incidents.

4.6 Audit Committee Reports

The Audit Committee considered the findings contained in reports prepared by the PCC's and Constabulary's internal auditor, TIAA. TIAA completed twelve reviews to support the Head of Internal Audit's draft opinion, with a further two reviews awaiting completion. Audits were designed to assess the extent to which the internal controls were adequate to ensure that activities and procedures were operating to achieve the PCC's and Chief Constable's objectives.

The Audit Committee can take reasonable assurance that the internal controls tested were suitably designed, consistently applied and effective for six out of 12 reviews. It can take substantial assurance for five of the internal audits. The review of limited duties was assessed as limited assurance.

Details of control weaknesses are published in internal audit reports that are either available on the PCC's website or from the OPCC.

The Constabulary has accepted the recommendations made to further strengthen its control environment. The internal auditors will report progress to the Audit Committee on the implementation of the recommendations and their compliance.

4.7 Economic Outlook

The UK economic outlook for 2026/27 is for weak but positive growth, reflecting low productivity, cautious business investment and modest consumer demand. Inflation is expected to continue easing towards the 2% CPI target, supporting gradual interest-rate cuts, but the outlook remains exposed to risks from global energy prices and geopolitical uncertainty.

Whilst inflation is falling, its impact has been felt in 2025/26 through increased prices and higher than budgeted pay awards. Estimates for non-pay inflation for 2026/27 are higher than the Constabulary's forecast in the 2025/26 medium term financial plan and the associated cost increase is unfunded by government.

There is continued pressure for high pay settlements in 2026/27. The budgeted pay award is set at 3.5% for 2026/27 given the 4.2% increase for officers and staff in 2025/26 and continued cost of living increases.

Full-year expenditure forecasts are prepared monthly and will monitor the impact of inflation during the financial year. The impact of inflation will be mitigated through a combination of measures. These include the reallocation of underspends during the financial year, reprioritisation of planned activities during 2026/27 and the reallocation of budgets where appropriate or the use of reserves. Inflation assumptions will be reconsidered when setting the budget for 2027/28. Progress at mitigating the impact of inflation will be reported to the Accountability and Performance Panel.

5. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

The Chief Constable has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the governance framework, including the system of internal control. This review has been informed by the work of the Constabulary, internal and external audit, and other review agencies and inspectorates.

5.1 Corporate Governance Assurance Group

The Corporate Governance Assurance Group (CGAG) was established to review the corporate governance framework and systems of internal control and to prepare the Annual Governance Statement. The group comprises the Chief Constable's Chief Finance Officer, the PCC's Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Finance.

5.2 Compliance with CIPFA Financial Management Code

The CGAG performed its annual assessment of the Constabulary's compliance against the CIPFA Financial Management Code (FM Code). The FM Code provides guidance for good and sustainable financial management. Compliance with the FM Code provides assurance that the Constabulary is managing its resources effectively. Performance was assessed against the following seven areas:

1. The responsibilities of the Chief Finance Officer and leadership team.
2. Governance and financial management style.
3. Medium to long-term financial management style.
4. The annual budget.

5. Stakeholder engagement and business cases.
6. Performance monitoring.
7. External financial reporting.

Results of this year's self-assessment showed that the Constabulary was materially compliant with the FM Code across all of the above areas.

5.3 Internal Audit

The Head of Internal Audit's draft opinion covering 2025/26 is as follows:

TIAA is satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk and Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary have reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place.

The Head of Internal Audit has arrived at this opinion through:

- Risk-based audit needs analysis from which activity has been prioritised over a three-year planning horizon to design an internal audit strategy.
- Designing and applying a risk-based methodology that is consistent with the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards.
- Delivery of individual assurance reports during the year and agreeing action plans with business owners to secure improvements.
- Monitoring the implementation of previous recommendations throughout the year and assessing progress as reasonable.

There were no further issues identified by the internal auditor that require reporting in the Annual Governance Statement as significant control weaknesses.

5.4 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

HMICFRS Reports

All reports published by HMICFRS containing recommendations or actions for improvement for the police, whether they are specific to Suffolk or applicable at a national level, require comment from the Chief Constable on how the Constabulary intends to progress them.

All recommendations arising from HMICFRS reports, both Suffolk-specific and national, are recorded centrally and allocated to strategic leads. There is also an online tracker where all forces can access updates on progress nationally.

The Deputy Chief Constable chairs an internal monthly meeting to monitor progress of these recommendations and to ensure that progress matches the required timescale. Progress is also monitored through the Accountability and Performance Panel. Inspection reports are available from the HMICFRS and PCC websites.

5.5 Data Security

Suffolk Constabulary made one referral to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) in 2025/26 (2024/25: two). This referral did not result in any formal action from the ICO. All recommendations from the ICO have been actioned, as necessary. Two referrals remain ongoing from 2022/23. These relate to two separate data breaches following the dissemination of Freedom of Information responses.

6. SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE WEAKNESSES

There were no significant weaknesses in the Constabulary's system of internal controls in 2025/26 that affected the achievement of the Chief Constables' key policies, aims and objectives.

Rachel Kearton
Chief Constable

1 May 2026

Kenneth Kilpatrick
Chief Finance Officer

1 May 2026