



**PAPER AP20/23**

## **ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

A meeting of the Accountability and Performance Panel was held via Skype at 09:00 on Friday 22 May 2020.

### **PRESENT:**

#### **Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner**

Chris Bland (Chief Finance Officer), Christopher Jackson (Chief Executive), Anna Parkinson (EA to the PCC and CEO), Tim Passmore (PCC) and Vanessa Scott (Head of Policy and Performance).

#### **Suffolk Constabulary**

Steve Jupp (Chief Constable), Rachel Kearton (Deputy Chief Constable) Kenneth Kilpatrick (Assistant Chief Officer) and Simon Megicks (Temporary Deputy Chief Constable).

### **In attendance**

For the public agenda: Councillor John Burns (Member of Police and Crime Panel), Andrew Eley (Senior Democratic Services Officer, Suffolk County Council), Councillor Brian Harvey (Member of Police and Crime Panel), Len Jacklin (Member of Police and Crime Panel), Councillor Patricia O'Brien (Chair, Police and Crime Panel) and Tom Potter (Journalist, East Anglian Daily Times).

## **PUBLIC AGENDA**

*Prior to the formal commencement of the agenda, the PCC welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting – the first time a meeting of the Accountability and Performance Panel has been held in such a format, necessary due to the COVID-19 restrictions.*

- 1 **Open minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2020** (Paper AP20/18)
  - 1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March were agreed as an accurate record and approved by the PCC.
  - 1.2 With regard to the outstanding actions it was noted that these were either complete or on hold, given the current circumstances.

2 **Revenue and Capital Outturn 2019-20** Report by the Assistant Chief Officer and Chief Finance Officer (Paper AP20/19)

- 2.1 The Assistant Chief Officer presented this report. He highlighted the revenue underspend of £1.853m which is largely income driven, as detailed in paragraph 3.6 of the report. The capital underspend of £3.150m is in the main due to delays in property transactions, which have been due to the C19 restrictions.

3 **Suffolk Constabulary Response to COVID-19** Report by the Chief Constable (Paper AP20/20)

- 3.1 The Chief Constable introduced this paper and then handed over to DCC Kearton in her roles as DCC and Chair of the Strategic Co-ordination Group and to T/DCC Megicks in his role as Gold Commander across both Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies, leading the response to C19.

- 3.2 Prior to presentation of this paper, the PCC congratulated the Constabulary on its response to the C19 pandemic and thanked everyone for all that they are doing.

- 3.3 DCC Kearton then formally presented the paper section by section, highlighting key points.

Introduction / National Policing Response to COVID-19 / Suffolk Constabulary Response

- 3.4 DCC Kearton opened by explaining the backdrop to the Force Response to C19, mentioning the timeline of events and the government guidance and NPCC guidance which followed, culminating in The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 coming into effect on 26 March 2020 aimed at supporting officers in enforcing measure to reduce the spread of C19.

- 3.5 Suffolk Constabulary, together with Norfolk Constabulary, had already set up a specific command structure in response to the situation in accordance with NPCC guidance on 18 March 2020 (detailed in section 3 of the report). This structure remains in place.

- 3.6 The Chief Executive asked whether this structure would be changing and if so, when this would be. DCC Kearton said that the situation was constantly under review and any command structure has to be appropriate for the local situation, and the current structure remains the most appropriate. T/DCC Megicks stressed that the Force was still very much in response and not in a position of recovery yet. A peer review of the command structure has recently been undertaken with very positive outcomes, confirming the structure in place is delivering what it needs to at the current time.

Partnerships

- 3.7 DCC Kearton described how partnership work is being undertaken, guided by the COVID-19 Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) of which she is Chair and also a representative of the Force. T/DCC Megicks also attends in his capacity as Gold Commander.

- 3.8 Given that C19 is a public health issue, the PCC asked why the Police were chairing the group rather than Public Health. DCC Kearton explained that in Suffolk it had been agreed that it would be more beneficial for the Director of Public Health to be able to focus on the health functions and not have to perform the additional role of co-ordinating the multi-agency

response at the same time. Public Health is likely to take the Chair of the SCG in due course, when the time is deemed appropriate. While the situation remains, and will remain, under review, it is not possible to give an exact date of change of chairmanship.

Business Continuity / People – HR, Recruitment, Learning and Wellbeing / People – sickness, shielding, stood down

- 3.9 DCC Kearton emphasised that it was due to the commitment and engagement of officers and staff that the business of the Force could be maintained. Flexibility of home working, social distancing in offices and finding alternative ways of working adopted by staff have all contributed to performance. Sickness levels have been very low and in fact have been falling, demonstrating the commitment across the Constabulary. The Workplace Health COVID-19 Team was created to support officers and staff to access information and advice relating to all aspects of C19 which has been very well received and utilised across both Constabularies.
- 3.10 The PCC was very pleased to note this asked for his thanks to be passed on to all concerned.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- 3.11 DCC Kearton confirmed that there is now a good and consistent flow of PPE and officers and staff have access to what they require.
- 3.12 The “COVID Car” was established as a dedicated resource to attend sudden deaths, with a specialist team not only with the appropriate PPE but also able to offer bespoke care to families at this time. This is not a practice which Forces have adopted nationally but the fact that Suffolk has put this specific resource in place has been highlighted as good practice.

Change in Working Practices

- 3.13 Changes in the working practice of policing can be particularly challenging as the very nature of the organisation is public facing. Those who have been able to homework have been supported to do so and indeed the pandemic has coincided with an already existing modernisation strategy. This has allowed technology to be exploited with the use of laptops, Skype, teleconferences etc.
- 3.14 For those who still need to work from offices, layouts have been changed to ensure appropriate social distancing and unused space utilised to allow teams to spread out. Working patterns have been staggered to help minimise the numbers of people in offices at any one time.

Operational Delivery

*Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)*

- 3.15 Within the powers of the Coronavirus Act 2020, Suffolk Constabulary had issued 311 FPNs as at 6 May 2020. DCC Kearton said that this places Suffolk in the middle of Forces when compared nationally. The Force has adopted the “Four Es” approach – Engage, Explain, Encourage, with Enforcement as a last resort.

### *Contact and Control Room (CCR) Call Demand*

- 3.16 DCC Kearton noted the changes in demand on the CCR – both 999 and 101 – as would be expected, as detailed in section 10 of the report. An increase in online reporting was also experienced, with the positive effect of helping keep the emergency and non-emergency lines available for those who need them.

### *County Policing Command (CPC)*

- 3.17 DCC Kearton drew attention to the fact that due to the decrease in demand, CPC had a higher level of deployable resources during the C19 pandemic. This allowed an increase in the amount of proactivity undertaken by officers – including increased public visibility providing reassurance to communities; pursuing outstanding suspects; and preparing for the anticipated increase in demand as social distancing measures are relaxed at a yet unknown point in the future.

### *Crime, Safeguarding and Incident Management (CSIM)*

- 3.18 Total recorded crime in Suffolk in the four weeks following implementation of lockdown has reduced by approximately 18%, however the national figure shows a decrease of 28% over the same period. DCC Kearton said that this was being further explored as it was not yet fully understood. Hypotheses are outlined in paragraph 10.20 which include: Suffolk has not adopted the position as other Forces have of withdrawing some policing services but are maintaining the same levels of response and investigation; Suffolk has in fact increased proactivity which increases the level of recorded investigations; Suffolk has used the opportunity to gain ground on outstanding suspects.
- 3.19 DCC Kearton said that most crime categories had reduced as a result of fewer people being outside their homes, the closure of pubs leading to less alcohol fuelled violence etc. Notably at the beginning of lockdown there was an immediate surge in armed robberies but offenders were promptly identified and arrested and therefore the trend did not continue. The area of Domestic Abuse (DA) is a concern and DCC Kearton felt that the picture will not be fully understood until the release of lockdown which may then enable victims to come forward who are currently unable to do so if they are at home with their abusers.
- 3.20 The PCC said that the Ministry of Justice had recently announced some extra funding for victims of crime so organisations in Suffolk will hopefully benefit from this and be able to offer increased services to victims if necessary.
- 3.21 The PCC also said that he was very pleased to see the proactive approach the Force has taken with the CPC and that Suffolk will benefit greatly from it.

### Corporate Communications

- 3.22 DCC Kearton said that this was a complex picture, with county wide communications relating to C19 emanating from the SCG, with the Communications Group thereof chaired by the Constabulary's Head of Corporate Communications. This is to ensure a consistent public message and approach taken by all partners.

- 3.23 In addition, the Constabulary is continuing with a programme of public engagement including work by community engagement officers and also media interviews undertaken by Chief Officers and other senior officers.
- 3.24 Internal communication is also paramount ensuring all officers and staff are kept up to date and informed with relevant information and also help maintain morale.
- 3.25 The PCC commended the Force's approach to communications during this time and also thanked the local media for their support.

#### Improvement and Innovation

- 3.26 DCC Kearton highlighted the establishment of "Op Evolve", a new programme of work based on the ethos of recover, restore and reform to assist the Force in transitioning out of "Op Response" when the time comes. Op Evolve aligns with the "Creating Capacity" workstream which was established in October 2019 and, using feedback from officers and staff, is about identifying areas for improvement and increased efficiencies. Op Evolve will build on the work of Creating Capacity and identify work practices adopted out of necessity during the response to C19 but which should be retained because of the efficiencies and benefits they derive. This applies to working practices both within the Force and externally with partners. Op Evolve is being led by newly appointed ACC Rob Jones.

#### Finance

- 3.27 This was mentioned in the Finance report at the previous agenda item. The costs of responding to C19 have remained broadly stable, with step increases only occurring when large purchases of equipment eg laptops have been made.

### **4 Any Other Business**

#### Format of meeting

- 4.1 The Chief Executive confirmed that the decision to conduct this meeting of the Accountability and Performance Panel via Skype (with no live broadcast or recording to be made available) was fully compliant with the Scheme of Governance and Consent. Any other regulations, such as Local Authority regulations, do not apply to meetings of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The meeting closed at 10:00.

*DCC Kearton (and members of the public) left the meeting.*

## PRIVATE AGENDA

[A detailed account of the discussions and decisions on the following items is contained in the confidential minutes]

- 5 Closed minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2020 (Paper AP20/21)
  - 5.1 The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2020 were agreed as an accurate record and approved by the PCC.
  
- 6 Protective Services Command – COVID-19 Report by the Chief Constable (Paper AP20/22)
  - 6.1 T/DCC Megicks presented this report.

The meeting closed at 10:20