

Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable for West Midlands

Auditor's Annual Report for
the year ended 31 March 2024

December 2024



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We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable have made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) requires us to report to you our commentary relating to proper arrangements.

We report if significant matters have come to our attention. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable’s arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.



The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed for the purpose of completing our work under the NAO Code and related guidance. Our audit is not designed to test all arrangements in respect of value for money. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify significant weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in arrangements that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting, on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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Introduction



Purpose of the Auditor's Annual Report

This report brings together a summary of all the work we have undertaken for the Police and Crime Commissioner (the PCC) and the Chief Constable (the CC) for West Midlands during 2023/24 as the appointed external auditor. The core element of the report is the commentary on the value for money (VfM) arrangements.

All PCCs and CCs are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. The PCC's and CC's responsibilities are set out in Appendix A.

PCCs and CCs report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness of these arrangements as part of their annual governance statements.

Responsibilities of the appointed auditor

Opinion on the financial statements

Auditors provide an opinion on the financial statements which confirms whether they:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the PCC and CC as at 31 March 2024 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended, and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

We also consider the Annual Governance Statement and undertake work relating to the Whole of Government Accounts consolidation exercise.

Value for money

We report our judgements on whether the PCC and CC has proper arrangements in place regarding arrangements under the three specified criteria:

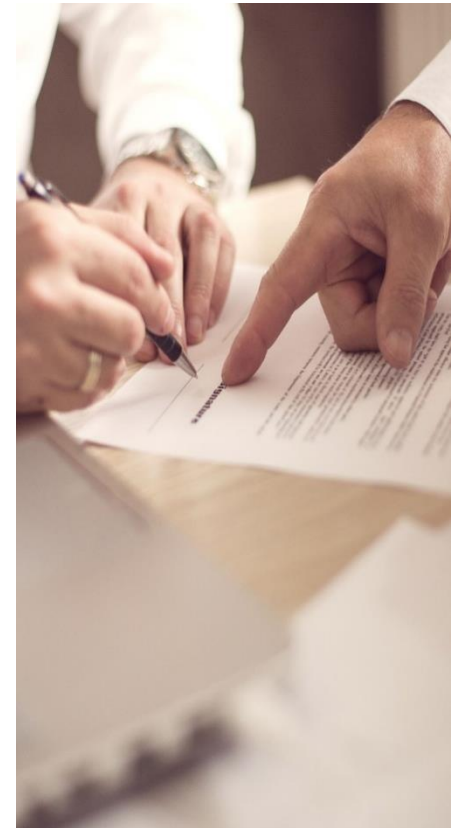
- financial sustainability
- governance
- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

The Value for Money auditor responsibilities are set out in Appendix B.

Auditor powers

Auditors of a local authority have a duty to consider whether there are any issues arising during their work that require the use of a range of auditor's powers.

These powers are set out on page 10 with a commentary on whether any of these powers have been used during this audit period.



Executive summary



Executive summary

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to consider whether the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable (CC) in charge of West Midlands Police (the Force) have put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources. Our summary findings are set out below. Our recommendations and management responses are summarised in the section starting on page 28.



Financial sustainability

The PCC and CC have delivered a robust financial position in 2023/24 and can demonstrate a good track record of sound financial management. The PCC and Force delivered a breakeven revenue outturn in 2023/24, after year-end adjustments, and have continued to keep reserves at an appropriate level to help manage the financial risks in future. The General Reserve has been increased by £4.7m to represent 2.25% of the force budget for 2024/25.

The Medium-term Financial Plan (MTFP) clearly articulates future financial plans, the challenges and risks associated with these, and the assumptions applied in its creation. Whilst the MTFP does show a challenging financial position into the future, this is understood, and appropriate work is underway to manage to gap.

Overall, we are satisfied that the PCC and CC had appropriate arrangements in place to manage the risks they faced in respect of their financial resilience. Our work has not identified any significant weakness regarding financial sustainability.



Governance

The Force maintains robust governance through regular updates to risk registers, comprehensive internal audits, and a whistleblowing policy to prevent fraud. Financial planning is thorough, with a balanced budget for 2024/25 and a detailed Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) extending to March 2029. Governance committees, such as the Joint Audit Committee (JAC), provide independent oversight, ensuring compliance with legislation and effective decision-making. Based on our areas of focus and evidence considered, we found no evidence of significant weaknesses in the PCC's and the CC's arrangements for ensuring informed decisions are made and risks properly managed.

In the prior year we reported a significant weakness across both Governance and Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness due to the findings of the PEEL inspection. We have closed the Governance aspect of this prior year significant weakness to recognise the improved arrangements afforded by the new operating model and improved performance in KPIs.



Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

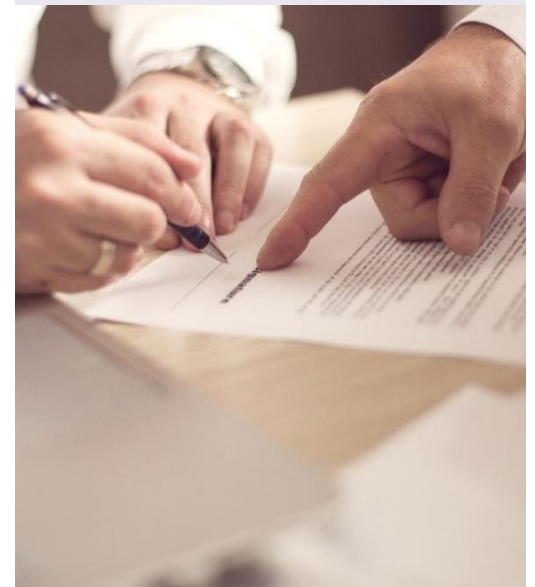
The new operating model and governance arrangements have resulted in noticeable improvements in performance management and crime investigation. The Monthly Performance Panel and the Force Leadership Conference, chaired by senior leadership, regularly review performance data (including financial information) to ensure strategic priorities are being evaluated. The Force has also made significant progress in enhancing investigation quality, training staff, and achieving better outcomes for victims, although there is still work to be done to improve service delivery.

As set out above, we reported a significant weakness in the prior year across both Governance and Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness due to HMICFRS's findings. We are rolling forward the second aspect of this significant weakness, as the outstanding issues involve enhancing service outcomes which will take more time to fully resolve.



We have completed our audit of your financial statements and issued unqualified audit opinions on 18 December 2024, following the Joint Audit Committee meeting on 5 December 2024 and reporting of our findings to the PCC and Chief Constable as those charged with governance.

Our findings are set out in further detail on page 9.



Executive summary (continued)



Overall summary of our Value for Money assessment of the Police and Crime Commissioner's and the Chief Constable's arrangements

Auditors are required to report their commentary on the PCC's and the CC's arrangements under specified criteria and 2023/24 is the fourth year that these arrangement have been in place.

The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed for the purpose of completing our work under the NAO Code and related guidance. Our audit is not designed to test all arrangements in respect of value for money. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify significant weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in arrangements that a more extensive special examination might identify. A summary of our judgements are set out in the table below.

| Criteria | 2022/23 Auditor judgement on arrangements | 2023/24 Risk assessment | 2023/24 Auditor judgement on arrangements | Direction of travel |
|---|---|--|--|---------------------|
| Financial sustainability | A No significant weakness but an improvement recommendation raised in relation to reserves levels and a prior year improvement recommendation has been rolled forward as it has not been actioned. | No risks of significant weakness identified | A No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified but one improvement recommendation has been made. The Force should set out a detailed savings plan over the medium term and monitor its progress throughout the year. This will help manage budget volatility and ensure financial stability over the medium term. | ↔ |
| Governance | R Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified as a result of the PEEL inspection and a key recommendation raised. An improvement recommendation has also been made. | Review governance arrangements and HMICFRS correspondence No further risks of significant weakness identified | A We are pleased to report that the Force has made significant improvements in its governance arrangements to manage and address the findings from PEEL inspection and have therefore lifted the significant weakness in relation to governance that we raised in the prior year. More detail is provided in the detailed findings section of this report and on page 7. We are carrying forward our improvement recommendation for implementing Internal Audit recommendations [page 17]. | ↑ |
| Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness | R Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified as a result of the PEEL inspection and a key recommendation raised. | Review performance and HMICFRS correspondence No further risks of significant weakness identified | R The Force is continuing to address key operational improvements identified by the 2023 Peel Inspection. We recognise that good progress has been made in 2023/24 and in the current year, however further work is required to fully address and embed the new arrangements to improve key aspects of operational performance. Therefore, the significant weaknesses raised in the prior year carries forward into 2024/25. We have found no further indications of significant risk in regard to the arrangements to safeguard economy, efficiency and effectiveness. | ↔ |

G

No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified or improvement recommendation made.

A

No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendations made.

R

Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendations made.

Executive summary (continued)



Significant weakness continuing in securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

As part of our work, we considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the PCC's and the CC's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources.

We reviewed the PCC's and the CC's arrangements to deliver improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness and have concluded that there was a remaining significant weakness in arrangements.

HMICFRS PEEL Inspection, December 2023

In the prior year 2022/23, we concluded that we were not satisfied that the Force had proper arrangements in place for governance and to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We identified a significant weakness in arrangements that impacted on both the Governance and Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness themes under the VfM framework. This considered comments from HMICFRS that issues reported in previous inspections had not been dealt with, which we considered to be a governance matter. See page 25 for background information.

During 2023/24, the Force has made significant progress in embedding the new operating model and improved governance arrangements with positive results. This demonstrated that by April 2024 the force had a good grip on its improvement needs and had significantly strengthened its governance arrangements to deliver improvement. We note that in September 2024, HMICFRS stepped down their intervention, from 'engaged' to 'scan' status which is the default phase of monitoring and reported that they have been satisfied with the Force's progress in addressing its areas of concern. There remains work to be done to achieve improved outcomes for victims and some other areas of service delivery. This was the case at the end of March 2024 and remains the case to date, although we recognise that good progress has been made demonstrated by improved Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in these areas of service.

Consequently, we are pleased to report that we are closing the Governance aspect of the significant weakness to recognise the improved arrangements. We are rolling forward the remaining significant weakness and key recommendation under the theme of Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness to reflect the ongoing journey of service improvement that still needs to be completed. This reflects the significant improvement made while recognising the operational improvements that are still being delivered and that will be subject to further follow up and review from the HMICFRS Inspectors. The issues that remain outstanding relate to improving service outcomes which we recognise will take more time to fully address.

Key recommendation 1

The Force must build upon the significant improvements in performance reporting and the renewed corporate focus on improvement afforded by the new operating model. The Force must now complete its work in addressing the remaining cause for concern highlighted by HMICFRS in their most recent update PEEL letter, dated 18 September 2024.



Opinion on the financial statements and use of auditor's powers



Opinion on the financial statements



Audit opinion on the financial statements

We issued unqualified opinions on the PCC's and the CC's financial statements on 18 December 2024, following the Joint Audit Committee meeting on 5 December 2024, and reporting to the PCC and CC as those charged with governance.

The full opinions will be included in the PCC's and the CC's audited accounts for 2023/24, which can be obtained from the PCC's and Force's websites.

Grant Thornton provides an independent opinion on whether the PCC's and CC's financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the PCC and the CC as at 31 March 2024 and of their expenditure and income for the year then ended, and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We conducted our audit in accordance with:

- International Standards on Auditing (UK)
- the Code of Audit Practice (2020) published by the National Audit Office, and
- applicable law

We are independent of the PCC and the CC in accordance with applicable ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

Findings from the audit of the financial statements

The PCC and the CC provided draft accounts in line with the national deadline.

Draft financial statements were of a reasonable standard and supported by detailed working papers.

Audit Findings Report

We report the detailed findings from our audit in our Audit Findings Report. A final version of our report was shared with the PCC and CC on 18 December 2024, following the version shared with the Joint Audit Committee on 5 December 2024. Requests for this Audit Findings Report should be directed to the PCC.

Use of auditor's powers

We bring the following matters to your attention:

2023/24

Statutory recommendations

Under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors can make recommendations to the audited body which need to be considered by the body and responded to publicly.

We did not make any written recommendations under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Public Interest Report

Under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors have the power to make a report if they consider a matter is sufficiently important to be brought to the attention of the audited body or the public as a matter of urgency, including matters which may already be known to the public, but where it is in the public interest for the auditor to publish their independent view.

We did not issue a public interest report.

Application to the Court

Under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, if auditors think that an item of account is contrary to law, they may apply to the court for a declaration to that effect.

We did not make an application to the Court.

Advisory notice

Under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors may issue an advisory notice if the auditor thinks that the authority or an officer of the authority:

- is about to make or has made a decision which involves or would involve the authority incurring unlawful expenditure,
- is about to take or has begun to take a course of action which, if followed to its conclusion, would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency, or
- is about to enter an item of account, the entry of which is unlawful.

We did not issue any advisory notices.

Judicial review

Under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors may make an application for judicial review of a decision of an authority, or of a failure by an authority to act, which it is reasonable to believe would have an effect on the accounts of that body.

We did not make an application for judicial review.

Value for Money Commentary on arrangements



The current policing landscape

It is within this context that we set out our commentary on the PCC's and the CC's value for money arrangements in 2023/24 and make recommendations where any significant weaknesses or improvement opportunities in arrangements have been identified.



National context

The police service faces an array of challenges. Levels of public trust are at historically low levels – a consequence of recent scandals and repeated failures to address these; alongside a general and widespread belief that the police cannot adequately deal with crime. Police resources have been stretched by the combination of increasing crime complexity and growing non-crime demands. Whilst overall levels of reported crime have declined over the last 10 years, charge rates had also declined, although this decline is being addressed. The absolute number of charges increased in 2022/23 for the first time since 2013/24. Forces are increasing their focus on sexual assaults and addressing violence against women and girls, while aiming to reduce the amount of time spent on non-crime demands such as responding to mental health incidents.

Police spending has increased significantly in recent years, largely to support the successful recruitment of an additional 20,000 police officers in England and Wales financed by ring-fenced Police Uplift Programme (PUP) Funding. Forces are under financial strain to maintain increased officer numbers, whilst the rapid recruitment to meet the conditions pertinent to receipt of PUP Funding has resulted in concerns over the adequacy of vetting arrangements and the burden placed on supervising officers whose capacity is stretched. It will take time to assess whether changes in officer numbers can result in sustained increases in the number of charges, and improvements in public trust. Aligned to these challenges, the police allocation formula used to allocate funding to forces has not changed since 2013. No revision has been made to the formula to reflect changes in population or local policing need. Police bodies and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services continue to lobby for the formula to be reviewed at the earliest opportunity.

Policing is under an increasing spotlight in terms of how the sector responds to the financial challenge it faces and delivers efficiencies. When presenting the Provisional Police Grant Report (England and Wales) 2024/25 in Parliament on 14 December 2023, the incumbent Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire referenced the Policing Productivity Review ("the Review"). The Review was published in November 2023 following the Home Office commissioning of the National Police Chiefs' Council in 2022 to review police productivity and provide recommendations to improve efficiency and effectiveness in policing. The Government's formal response to the review was due to be published during 2024. Pending this the Minister's statement to the House confirmed the Government's expectation that policing should continue to deliver on opportunities presented by new technology and innovation to deliver productivity improvements and drive forward efficiencies in order to maximise officer time and service to the public.

Given the outcome of the general election that occurred on 4 July 2024 any changes to government policy relating to the sector, including review of the police allocation formula and response to the Policing Productivity Review are at present uncertain.

The current policing landscape

It is within this context that we set out our commentary on the PCC's and the CC's value for money arrangements in 2023/24 and make recommendations where any significant weaknesses or improvement opportunities in arrangements have been identified.



Local context

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable (CC) are separate legal entities. The PCC is elected by the public every four years with a responsibility to secure the maintenance of an efficient and effective police force and to hold the CC to account for the exercise of operational policing duties under the Police Act 1996. The CC has a statutory responsibility for the control, direction and delivery of operational policing services in the West Midlands. The PCC for West Midlands during 2023/24 was Simon Foster, who took office in May 2021. He was re-elected in May 2024. The CC for the West Midlands during 2023/24 was Craig Guildford who took up his post on 5 December 2022.

The PCC launched his Police and Crime plan (PCP) in November 2021 covering the period 2021 to 2025. The PCP is set around six key themes: Rebuilding Community Policing, Working in Partnership Locally, Police Collaboration, Civic leadership and campaigning for change, Good governance, transparency, equality and public engagement and Funding, grants, resources, police precept and financial planning.

The PCC is scrutinised by the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel ("WMPCP"). Birmingham City Council is the lead authority responsible for the establishment and administration of WMPCP. Home Office guidelines state that Panels must be made up of at least one elected representative from each local authority (unitary, county and district) within the force area plus two independent co-optees. There must also be at least 10 elected representatives on the Panel, with membership also reflecting the geographical and political balance of the area. For West Midlands, the panel has 12 elected (councillor) members representing the seven West Midlands councils, and 3 appointed independent (non-political) members. The responsibilities of the Panel include reviewing and making recommendations on the PCC's police and crime plan, the level of Council Tax for policing, and the PCC's annual performance report. The Panel also reviews the PCC's proposals for appointing a new chief constable and senior officers and has the power to reject these decisions. Additionally, the Panel handles complaints against the PCC and deputy PCC, appoints an acting PCC if needed, and conducts in-depth scrutiny inquiries into policing and community safety topics to provide recommendations for the PCC.

Financial sustainability



We considered how the audited bodies:

ensure that they identify all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to their short and medium-term plans and build these into them;

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Chief Constable (CC) have demonstrated strong financial management, achieving an underspend of £27.3m in 2023/24, which is 3.9% of the total budget of £695.7m. The financial position was influenced by several factors, including underspends in pay-related expenditure, overachievement on income, diligent management, and the introduction of a new operating model in April 2023. The Force exceeded its police officer recruitment targets, allowing it to claim Home Office grant income for these posts.

The total grant settlement for the West Midlands was £569.7m, an increase of £10.3m from the previous year, reflecting commitments to the police officer uplift programme and supportive pay awards. The office of the Police and Crime Commissioner generated increased income from partners and additional success in bidding for grants.

The capital programme outturn position at the end of 2023/24 was £23.6m against a budgeted spend of £26.5m, resulting in an underspend of £2.9m. The budget underspend was due to delays in the Estates Strategy realignment by the new Chief Constable and IT infrastructure developments. This was partially offset by an overspend on fleet vehicles, which included delayed spending from 2022-23. The 2023-24 capital programme was funded through a mix of short-term borrowing for fleet and IT, long-term borrowing for estates, and revenue contributions to capital.

The Joint Audit Committee (JAC) approves a Treasury Management Strategy Statement before each financial year and receives regular updates on treasury performance.

The Force presents its budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in February each year, with an updated MTFP presented in October. A balanced budget has been set for the 2024/25 financial year, including a refreshed MTFP. The MTFP outlines the reserves, detailing their purpose, types, and projecting forward to March 2029. It provides comprehensive forecasts of revenue, reserves, and overall financial planning, including anticipated future grant funding. Additionally, it incorporates all pay awards for 2023, provisions for 2024 pay awards for all officers and staff at 2.5%, inflationary pressures on non-pay expenses, and attrition and recruitment according to the Force’s workforce plan. The additional £3 precept flexibility has been allocated to address concerns identified in the recent HMICFRS inspection. These elements align with our expectations.

G

- G** No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified or improvement recommendation made.
- A** No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendations made.
- R** Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendations made.

Financial sustainability



We considered how the audited bodies:

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

The 2024/25 Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was presented to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in February 2024. It addressed revenue funding, the revenue budget, savings plans, the capital programme, reserves, and associated risks.

The MTFP currently projects a cumulative funding gap of £74.0m over 5 years, as shown to the right:

| Revenue Budget £m | Current Budget 2024/25 | MTFP 2025/26 | MTFP 2026/27 | MTFP 2027/28 | MTFP 2028/29 |
|--|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Police Force Net Expenditure | 747.4 | 764.3 | 785.2 | 810.8 | 836.0 |
| Police & Crime Commissioner | 10.0 | 10.2 | 10.4 | 10.6 | 10.8 |
| Total Expenditure | 757.4 | 774.5 | 795.6 | 821.4 | 849.8 |
| Police Grants | (582.2) | (591.2) | (600.3) | (609.6) | (619.1) |
| Precept | (161.2) | (171.0) | (180.7) | (190.6) | (200.8) |
| Planned Contributions (to) / from Reserves | (14.0) | (2.8) | (0.4) | (0.4) | (0.4) |
| Potential Savings Required | 0.0 | 9.5 | 14.2 | 20.8 | 29.5 |

There is a £9.5m savings requirement for 2025/26, which is expected to rise to £29.5m by 2028/29. The total revenue reserves are estimated to be approximately £62.1m by 31 March 2025, £16.7m of which held in the general reserve. The 2024/25 Revenue Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan require the use of £14.0m of earmarked reserves, primarily from the budget reserve (£6.5m) and the estates strategy reserve (£6.4m). We have reviewed the ongoing levels and usage of reserves over the medium-term financial plan and determined that reserves are being used to manage budget volatility rather than as a temporary solution to a savings gap. However, moving forward, the Force should reduce its reliance on the Budget Reserve and outline how savings will be achieved. While general savings are reported in the budget monitoring reports, we advise that the Force develop a detailed plan to address the savings requirement in the medium term and monitor progress against it.

An example of savings which have been made to date has been a result of a review of IT licences and equipment in IT and Digital which is expected to yield savings of over £1m by optimising the number of licences held and removing licences where they are no longer required.

All savings are ultimately presented to the Strategic Police & Crime Board (SPCB) through the Efficiency and Savings Board. To support the 2024/25 revenue budget, a savings target of £10 million was required. This has been achieved through a combination of non-pay reductions, PCSO vacancies, and other staff savings, although these were somewhat offset by higher-than-inflation increases and operational growth.

plan to bridge funding gaps and identify achievable savings

A

Improvement recommendation 1:
The Force should set out a detailed savings plan over the medium term and monitor its progress throughout the year.

Financial sustainability



We considered how the audited bodies:

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

plan finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities

The PCC and CC have arrangements in place ensure they plan their finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities within the Police Crime Plan. These priorities are monitored through the Performance Reports presented to the SPCB and feed into the budgeting process and MTFP on an annual basis.

G

ensure their financial plan is consistent with other plans such as workforce, capital, investment and other operational planning which may include working with other local public bodies as part of a wider system

The Police and Crime Plan (PCP) 2021-2025 includes sections on resources and spending, incorporating workforce, revenue, capital and investment planning which feed into the budget setting and MTFP process on an annual basis. There are up-to-date workforce plans, a procurement strategy, a reserves strategy and treasury management policy in place to support the PCP.

The Capital Plan sets out the capital plans for the 5-year period. These are reported on via the Financial Performance Reports and slippage/delays are explained there where appropriate. There has not been any evidence of major capital investment being postponed or cancelled without rationale.

The general reserve balance at 31 March 2024 was £16.7m, an increase of £4.7m from the previous year. This ensured that the balance remains above 2% of the net revenue funding and is held as resilience against major incidents or in-year emergencies. This addresses the prior year recommendation and complies with CIPFA's recommendation that unallocated revenue reserves should be between 2% and 4% of revenue expenditure.

G

Identify and manage risks to financial resilience, e.g. unplanned changes in demand, including challenge of the assumptions underly their plans

The MTFP includes considerable detail about the finances and associated risks to the PCC and Force. It also includes specific sections which deal with risks, scenario planning and the assumptions made in the financial planning exercise.

Regular Revenue and Capital monitoring reports are presented to the 'Strategic Policing & Crime Board' and cover the budget variances and year-end forecast.

G

Governance



We considered how the Audited Bodies:

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

monitor and assess risk and gain assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud

The PCC and Force maintain separate risk registers that are updated regularly and reported to the Joint Audit Committee (JAC). Risks have unique reference numbers, associated owners, have details regarding impacts and mitigations and are scored.

Risk is RAG rated and assessed by considering the causes of the risk and the consequences if that risk were to happen.

The latest review of the risk register (presented to the JAC in September 2024) has identified no new corporate risks for the OPCC but still includes one high risk identified in June 2024. This relates to whether the funding for the VRP is discontinued or not sustained at the same level.

A Whistleblowing policy and Gifts & Hospitality procedures are in place in respect of the prevention and detection of fraud.

The Internal Audit (IA) opinion for 2023-24 was reasonable assurance.

19 audits were completed for the final report. Three audits are in progress, and two drafts await management comments. A small proportion of limited assurance opinions were issued, indicating weaknesses in the governance and control frameworks operating, but no audits received minimal assurance.

The Head of Internal Audit now attends the Financial Governance Board which gives a forum for debating and discussing the implementation of long-standing audit actions. Management’s view is that this is already proven beneficial, and will continue to allow an appropriate level of focus in this area.

Areas for improvement

According to the March 2024 Internal Audit update report to the Joint Audit Committee: out of 220 significant recommendations followed up since 2019/20, 176 (80%) were fully implemented. An additional 8% were deemed redundant or had risk acceptance, while 27 (12%) remained outstanding. This follow-up rate has shown a slight improvement from March 2023 when it was at 73%. Despite the slight improvement, the Force should continue to improve its recommendation implementation rate, particularly for those recommendations that are over a year old.

Improvement recommendation 2:
The Force should continue to improve its recommendation implementation rate, particularly for those recommendations that are over a year old

A

- G No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified or improvement recommendation made.
- A No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendations made.
- R Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendations made.

Governance



We considered how the Audited Bodies:

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

approach and carry out the annual budget setting process

Our review confirmed that the MTFP forms the basis of the annual budget and involved the PCC, CC and other key stakeholders. The latest MTFP (2024/25) outlines key assumptions like funding, inflationary increases and the maintenance of the uplift headcount. It also highlights main expenditure pressures and potential savings.

The Force starts its annual budget process in September, continuing until November. The proposal is submitted to the Strategic Policing and Crime Board in January and the Police & Crime Panel in February. During this time, the Force outlines its financial objectives and identifies any deficiencies. The plan is reviewed by governance boards in September and October. Department heads and Assistant Chief Constables contribute by identifying key issues, potential savings, and investment areas. The horizon scanning exercise covers up to 18 months for the upcoming budget.

The Force employs a Priority Based Budget (PBB) approach to its budget-setting process. A ‘Performance Day’ is conducted at the Force every month where various performance issues, financial performance, and KPIs are discussed.

The 2024/25 budget was presented to the Strategic Policing and Crime Board in January 2024 and the Police & Crime Panel in February 2024. We find the MTFP assumptions to be prudent and reasonable.

G

Governance



| We considered how the Audited Bodies: | Commentary on arrangements | Assessment |
|--|---|------------|
| <p>Ensure effective processes and systems are in place to ensure budgetary control; to communicate relevant, accurate and timely management information; supports statutory financial reporting; and ensure corrective action is taken where needed, including in relation to significant partnerships</p> | <p>There is a well-established process for financial monitoring, conducted on a monthly basis, with budget variances reported periodically to the SPCB through finance monitoring reports. These reports provide updates on both the PCC and CC as well as forecast outturns. They are comprehensive, detailing the forecasted revenue outturn and capital budget performance, including explanations for any over or under expenditures. Additionally, a high-level summary is provided to set the context and enable decision-makers to focus on key areas of potential concern.</p> | <p>G</p> |
| <p>Ensure they make properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency, including from audit committee</p> | <p>Our review of papers submitted to the Strategic Policing & Crime Board (SPCB), JAC and Police and Crime Panel (PCP) indicates that a good standard of documentation is presented to those committees. Reports are clear, well-structured and give the committee members the information they require to make informed decisions.</p> <p>We conclude that the governance committees fulfil their roles effectively, with appropriate 'tone from the top'.</p> <p>The purpose of the Joint Audit Committee (JAC) is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements to the PCC and CC. The Committee's role in ensuring that there is sufficient assurance over governance, risk and control gives greater confidence to those charged with governance that those arrangements are effective.</p> <p>The JAC comprises five independent members and met five times in 2023/24. From our attendance at the JAC and also via our review of the minutes and papers we are satisfied that the committee is fulfilling its duties adequately and continues to be effective in its role.</p> | <p>G</p> |

Governance



We considered how the Audited Bodies:

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

monitor and ensure appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of staff and board member behaviour and where it procures and commissions services.

Both the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Constabulary have a range of policies and procedures in place to monitor and ensure compliance with legislation and regulatory standards. These include procedure rules, policies and internal management processes established for Financial Management, Procurement, Health and Safety, Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing), Complaints Handling, Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption and Records Management, including security of information and information sharing.

There is no evidence to suggest that there has been a breach of legislative or regulatory requirements and no serious data breach has been recorded.

During the 2023/24 period, the Force has made substantial progress in implementing the new operating model and enhancing governance structures with favourable outcomes. By April 2024, the Force had effectively addressed its improvement needs and significantly reinforced its governance to ensure continuous improvement. In September 2024, HMICFRS downgraded their intervention from 'engaged' to 'scan' status, indicating satisfaction with the Force's advancements in addressing areas of concern. Work remains to be done to achieve better outcomes for victims and other service delivery areas. This was observed at the end of March 2024 and continues to be the case, although notable progress has been shown through improved Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in these service areas.

G

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness – commentary on arrangements



We considered how the audited bodies:

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

use financial and performance information to assess performance to identify areas for improvement

Good governance arrangements are in place around performance management, and these have been further improved under the new operating model. Please see page 23 for further details.

The Monthly Performance Panel, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable (D/CC), includes all senior leadership team (SLT) members and reviews the year's programme of work. It conducts cyclical "deep dives" into portfolio areas. The Force Leadership Conference, chaired by the Chief Constable, meets monthly with the D/CC and SLT (ACCs, Chief Superintendents, and Directors of Services) to review performance information, including financial data. The Senior Leaders Conference, held quarterly, involves 300 senior leaders sharing performance details. The Strategic Police & Crime Board (SPCB) also meets quarterly to receive financial performance updates.

The review of the reports indicates that the quality of the reports is sufficient for the Board to understand the activities undertaken to meet the priorities, the associated risks, and how the Constabulary is managing those risks. The Constabulary continues to use its Qlik Sense software tool for performance management, and there is no evidence to suggest that strategic priorities are not being evaluated.

G

- G** No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified or improvement recommendation made.
- A** No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendations made.
- R** Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendations made.

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness



HMICFRS

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services in the public interest.

They:

- Inspect and monitor the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales reporting on their effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy via PEEL assessments
- Work with other inspectorates within criminal justice and more broadly to address problems involving more than one agency. For example, the programme of police custody inspections with the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Assess and report on the efficiency, effectiveness and people of the 44 fire and rescue services in England.

External Auditors consider the outcome of PEEL assessments when performing our VFM work. Particularly in assessing Police Bodies' arrangements to assess performance and identify areas for improvement in outcomes.

Responding to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) PEEL Report

In September 2023, HMICFRS inspected West Midlands Police as part of their police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) programme. During the inspection, they identified the following four causes of concern:

- ❖ The force needs to make sure that its multi-agency risk assessment conferences work effectively to keep vulnerable people safe.
- ❖ The force doesn't manage the risk posed to the public by registered sex offenders effectively.
- ❖ The force doesn't manage the risk posed by online child abuse offenders effectively.
- ❖ The force needs to make sure it carries out effective investigations which lead to satisfactory results for victims.

On 24 November 2023, HMICFRS moved West Midlands Police to the 'Engage' phase of the monitoring process.

In May and June 2024, HMICFRS revisited the force to scrutinise the progress made against three of the above causes of concern. They closed these three causes of concern, due to sustained improvements in the force's performance. However, there was one remaining cause of concern, which related to how well the force carries out effective investigations that lead to satisfactory results for victims. In September 2024, HMICFRS reinspected the force to assess progress against the five recommendations associated with this remaining cause of concern. These were:

- make sure staff and officers have sufficient skills and capabilities to carry out high-quality investigations;
- make sure it carries out proportionate, thorough and timely investigations into reported crimes, which are supervised effectively;
- make sure investigation plans are created where applicable and that all investigative opportunities are taken;
- make sure it consistently achieves appropriate outcomes for victims; and
- make sure it is using outcomes appropriately, in a way that complies with force and national policies, leading to satisfactory results for victims.

On 17 September 2024, HMICFRS closed three of these five recommendations. They found that the force had significantly improved in three areas. But the force needed to make more progress against the remaining two recommendations.

HMICFRS concluded that West Midlands Police is continuing to make good progress, and they are satisfied that it has made enough progress to address some concerns in respect of how well it investigates crime. The force still has work to do to achieve appropriate outcomes for victims, use outcomes appropriately and better understand why victims withdraw their support for investigations. But its continued focus on increasing the number of trained investigators and improving the quality of its investigations and supervision will support this. The plans that the force has put in place to continue making these improvements. The force has returned to 'Scan', the default phase of monitoring, with immediate effect.

See Executive Summary on page 7 for how we are carrying forward the Key recommendation. Further details on next page.

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness – commentary on arrangements



We considered how the audited bodies:

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

evaluate the services they provide to assess performance and identify areas for improvement

During 2023/24, the Force has implemented the new operating model and its governance arrangements, resulting in noticeable improvements.

The Force has ensured that staff and officers possess the necessary skills for high-quality investigations. Clear aims, objectives, and expected standards have been set. Significant effort is being put into training, and cases are allocated to appropriately skilled personnel. While workloads are generally manageable, there are still some shortages of trained investigators. The Force is addressing these issues and has well-developed plans to meet the demand for trained investigators.

The Force has enhanced crime investigation through prompt arrests, performance data, quality assurance, and decision-making prompts. This ensures timely investigations and consistent supervisory reviews. While recognising some inconsistencies in investigation quality, the Force addresses these with supervisory improvement plans.

The Force is completing investigation plans more consistently. Officers and staff are following and regularly updating these plans. The Force uses additional training, performance meetings, quality assurance testing, decision-making prompts, and data from its investigations dashboard to ensure that investigation plans are in place and all investigative opportunities are taken.

The force has made some progress in achieving appropriate outcomes for victims. However, the number of crimes resulting in a positive outcome following investigations remains low. In the year ending 31 March 2024, the force had an 'offences brought to justice' outcome rate of 5.5 percent, which is an improvement from 4.5 percent for the year ending 31 March 2023, but still considered low. The force reported continued improvements in the number of positive outcomes since this period.

The Force must ensure it uses outcomes properly, in line with policies, to achieve satisfactory results for victims. Improvement has been made, but accurate recording of outcomes is needed to pinpoint areas for improvement and address underperformance. The Force recognises the necessity of understanding why victims withdraw support from investigations. Efforts have been directed towards enhancing investigation standards, supervising investigations, and improving initial victim contact and updates. However, the force acknowledges the importance of further consulting victims, gathering their feedback, and applying appropriate outcomes to crimes. Efforts are ongoing to address these areas.

Continued over the page.

R

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness – commentary on arrangements



We considered how the audited bodies:

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

evaluate the services they provide to assess performance and identify areas for improvement

By April 2024, the Force had a strong handle on its improvement needs and significantly enhanced its governance. In September 2024, HMICFRS reduced their intervention status from 'engaged' to 'scan', showing satisfaction with the Force's progress. While there is still work to be done to improve outcomes for victims and service delivery, significant progress has been demonstrated by improved KPIs up to March 2024 and beyond.

We are closing the Governance aspect of the significant weakness to recognise the improved arrangements but are rolling forward the remaining significant weakness and key recommendation under the 3Es theme to reflect the ongoing journey of service improvement that still needs to be completed. Operational improvements that are still being delivered will be subject to further follow up (and review from the HMICFRS Inspectors), as we recognise will take more time to fully address.

R

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness – commentary on arrangements



We considered how the audited bodies:

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

ensure they deliver their role within significant partnerships and engages with stakeholders they have identified, in order to assess whether they are meeting their objectives

The Police and Crime Plan details the seven Community Safety Partnerships within the Force's jurisdiction, aligned with local authority boundaries. These partnerships are legally required to collaborate and develop strategies aimed at reducing crime and disorder. Together, they form the West Midlands Community Safety Partnership to coordinate efforts in crime reduction, local policing and public safety. They commission services across all seven areas, while allowing each area to address specific local concerns. Additionally, they oversee the local implementation of national strategies, such as the Serious Violence Strategy.

The recent 2023-2025 PEEL inspection reported that: 'We found examples of the force working with partner agencies and communities to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour. For example, the Violence Reduction Partnership.' This is positive evidence of a strong partnership working culture and appropriate arrangements.

The Police has a dedicated section on the website detailing examples of collaboration with a number of other forces and organisations to provide services.

Any activity which requires decision making is routed through the SPCB so all partnership and collaborative work will go through this mechanism.

The proposal to transfer the PCC powers to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) was cancelled following a Judicial Review. The High Court determined that the Home Secretary's decision to approve the transfer of PCC powers to the Mayor of the West Midlands was unlawful. This decision was quashed on the grounds that the consultation process conducted by the Home Secretary was insufficient and did not provide adequate information for an informed response.

G

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness – commentary on arrangements



We considered how the audited bodies:

Commentary on arrangements

Assessment

Commission or procure services, assessing whether they are realising the expected benefits

There is a Joint procurement strategy and 'Contracts & Procurement Team'. All procurement activities are assessed for value for money as part of the evaluation process. Bids are scored based on the price, quality, and social value. To ensure that the value for money obtained as part of the tendering and award process is delivered, all contract terms and conditions include service specific Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), which enable the supplier to be held accountable for the provisions they put forward as part of their bid. These are regularly monitored through our contract management process, to ensure that contracted commitments are delivered, and poor performance is challenged throughout the lifetime of the contract.

The Force is reviewing its procurement processes to comply with the new Procurement Bill. The department is also investing in new technology and tools and aligning its training programmes with the requirements of the new legislation, using Blue Light Commercial's resources.

The additional improvements made in the last 12 months have positioned the force well for the expected changes. These improvements include:

- Recruitment to vacant posts to increase the capacity and capability in the team.
- Upskilling of the team on contract management and social value.
- Renewal of ethical training via CIPs, which includes modern slavery legislation.
- Specific performance reporting on our platinum and gold category suppliers.
- Refresher training on core procurement systems, including the Social Value Portal and our contract management database Lean Linking.
- The launch of a contracts and procurement intranet page to provide clarity around processes and governance arrangements.
- Attendance at portfolio boards to discuss changes in legislation, pipeline activity, and supplier performance.

G

**Value for Money
Recommendations raised in
2023/24**



Recommendations raised in 2023/24

| Recommendation | Type of recommendation * | Criteria impacted | Evidence | Impact or possible future impact | Actions agreed by Management |
|---|--------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Roll-forward from 2022/23: The Force needs to establish effective systems for monitoring and reporting on its performance. This will help to show that the recent changes in leadership and operations are leading to long-lasting improvements in services that address the concerns raised by HMICFRS in the PEEL report. | Key | 3Es: evaluate the services they provide to assess performance and identify areas for improvement | See Executive Summary and pages 22-24 | Insufficient action taken to sufficiently address the findings from previous HMICFRS inspections | The Force is no longer in Engage status, having been reinspected in key areas by HMICFRS. A key element of this relates to the significant improvement in both performance and reporting, driven through the formal monthly Performance Day, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and attended by all Chief Superintendents and Heads of Department. |
| The Force should set out a detailed savings plan over the medium term and monitor its progress throughout the year | Improvement | Financial Sustainability: plan to bridge funding gaps and identify achievable savings | See page 15 | Savings plans are essential for managing budget volatility and ensuring financial stability over the medium term. They help organizations like the Force to reduce reliance on reserves and outline how savings will be achieved. | The Force is currently finalising savings plans for 2025/26. Some of these will be permanent savings for future years and we will then be moving into identifying further savings for the medium term through our established PBB process. Key to this will be information for the settlement for 2025/26 and future Comprehensive Spending Review. This report acknowledges a good track record in sound financial management. |
| The Force should continue to improve its recommendation implementation rate, particularly for those recommendations that are over a year old. | Improvement | Governance: monitor and assess risk and gain assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud | See page 17 | Failure to implement recommendations one they are accepted by management means the Force limits its opportunity for growth and service improvement and is failing to meet internal targets. | Following a restructure, the Force is focussing on improvements in this area, and follow up internal audit reports completed during 2024/25 confirm that some of these improvements have already been delivered. This area is being monitored through the Financial Governance Board on a monthly basis. |

* Explanations of the different types of recommendations which can be made are summarised in Appendix B.

Appendices

Appendix A: Responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable (CC)

Public bodies spending taxpayers' money are accountable for their stewardship of the resources entrusted to them. They should account properly for their use of resources and manage themselves well so that the public can be confident.

Financial statements are the main way in which local public bodies account for how they use their resources. Local public bodies are required to prepare and publish financial statements setting out their financial performance for the year. To do this, bodies need to maintain proper accounting records and ensure they have effective systems of internal control.

All local public bodies are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness from their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. Local public bodies report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness with which the arrangements are operating, as part of their annual governance statement.

The Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is required to prepare the financial statements in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom. In preparing the financial statements, the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is responsible for assessing the PCC's and the Chief Constable's ability to continue as a going concern and use the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention by government that the services provided by the PCC and Chief Constable will no longer be provided.

The PCC and the Chief Constable are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.



Appendix B:

Value for Money Auditor responsibilities




Value for Money arrangements work

All Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Chief Constables (CCs) are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness from their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. The audited body’s responsibilities are set out in Appendix A.


PCCs and CCs report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness of these arrangements as part of their annual governance statement.

Under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 we are required to satisfy ourselves that the PCC and the CC have made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources. The National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice (‘the Code’), requires us to assess arrangements under three areas:




Financial Sustainability

Arrangements for ensuring the Police can continue to deliver services. This includes planning resources to ensure adequate finances and maintain sustainable levels of spending over the medium term (3-5 years).



Governance

Arrangements for ensuring that the Police makes appropriate decisions in the right way. This includes arrangements for budget setting and management, risk management, and ensuring the Council makes decisions based on appropriate information.



Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Arrangements for improving the way the Police delivers its services. This includes arrangements for understanding costs and delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes for service users.

2023/24 is the fourth year of the Code, and we undertake and report the work in three phases as set out in the Code.

Phase 1 – Planning and initial risk assessment

As part of our planning, we assess our knowledge of the PCC’s and CC’s arrangements and whether we consider there are any indications of risks of significant weakness. This is done against each of the reporting criteria and continues throughout the reporting period

| Information which informs our risk assessment | |
|---|---|
| Cumulative knowledge and experience of the audited body | Annual Governance Statement and the Head of Internal Audit annual opinion |
| Interviews and discussions with key stakeholders | The work of inspectorates and other regulatory bodies |
| Progress with implementing recommendations | Key documents provided by the audited body |
| Findings from our opinion audit | Our knowledge of the sector as a whole |

Phase 2 – Additional risk-based procedures and evaluation

Where we identify risks of significant weakness in arrangements, we will undertake further work to understand whether there are significant weaknesses. We use auditor’s professional judgement in assessing whether there is a significant weakness in arrangements and ensure that we consider any further guidance issued by the NAO.

Phase 3 – Reporting our commentary and recommendations

The Code requires us to provide a commentary on your arrangements which is detailed within this report. Where we identify weaknesses in arrangements we raise recommendations. A range of different recommendations can be raised by the PCC’s and CC’s auditors as follows:

- **Statutory recommendations** – actions which should be taken where significant weaknesses are identified with arrangements. These are made under Section 24 (Schedule 7) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and require discussion at a public meeting and a public response.
- **Key recommendations** – actions which should be taken by the PCC and CC where significant weaknesses are identified within arrangements.
- **Improvement recommendations** – actions which should improve arrangements in place but are not a result of identifying significant weaknesses in the PCC’s and CC’s arrangements.

Appendix C:

Follow-up of previous recommendations

| Recommendation | Type of recommendation * | Date raised | Progress to date | Addressed? | Further action? |
|---|--------------------------|-------------|---|------------|---|
| KR1 The Force needs to establish effective systems for monitoring and reporting on its performance. This will help to show that the recent changes in leadership and operations are leading to long-lasting improvements in services that address the concerns raised by HMICFRS in the PEEL report. | Key | March 2024 | Since the arrival of the new DCC in April 2023, there has been a significant shift in focus in relation to performance management. The performance across all areas shows improvements and this can be evidenced in the documents shared (PD packs). In addition to this, we also described the HMICFRS oversight board chaired by the DCC. We have evidenced as part of the pack that was shared with GT, that month on month progress has been made in addressing open recommendations and reduction in the numbers that are overdue. | Partially | We are closing the Governance aspect of the significant weakness to recognise the improved arrangements but are rolling forward the 3Es aspect of the significant weakness, to reflect the ongoing journey of service improvement that still needs to be completed. |
| 1 The Force should review the potential for shared service opportunities for Back Office services as a way of achieving cost reductions. | Improvement | March 2024 | In year the force has carried out a review of its People Services directorate and via reshaping the delivery of this function has identified a number of savings. The discussions around partnership working with another force in new areas such as fleet maintenance and uniform services are ongoing. Whilst collaborations such as legal services are well established. There is a wider piece of the work that the force is actively participating in, which is the Home Office initiative 'Commercial Efficiency and Collaboration Programme' (CECP). This will look at 4 main areas across all forces, these being: National Buying; Supplier Negotiation; Local Savings; Cost Recovery and Shared Services. The programme was launched on the 18th November, although some work has already commenced around the provision of data. | Yes | No |

*Explanations of the different types of recommendations which can be made are summarised in Appendix B.

Appendix C:

Follow-up of previous recommendations

continued

| Recommendation | Type of recommendation * | Date raised | Progress to date | Addressed? | Further action? |
|--|--------------------------|-------------|---|------------|---|
| 2 The Force should increase the general fund balance to meet CIPFA's recommendation that unallocated revenue reserves should be between 2% and 4% of revenue expenditure. | Improvement | March 2024 | Completed – the 23/24 underspends were assigned to a number of reserves including the general fund reserve and the budget reserve. | Yes | No |
| 3 The Force must take steps to ensure that its recommendation implementation is at 100% or explained as to why recommendations have not been implemented. | Improvement | March 2024 | Outstanding audit recommendations are followed up every three months and, if they are not implemented, full details of progress is provided and reported to Joint Audit Committee. A recommendations tracker is available to monitor progress and track implementation. | Partially | Recommendation superseded by IR1 in the 'Recommendations raised in 2023/24' section above |

*Explanations of the different types of recommendations which can be made are summarised in Appendix B.

