



**JOINT AUDIT COMMITTEE (JAC)  
Public Minutes**

Notes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 at 09:30

**Attendees:**

Sue Davis	Chair
Faye Lloyd	Committee Member
Paul Donnelly	Committee Member
Rachel Barber	Committee Member
Jane Heppel	Chief Finance Officer - PCC
Lynn Joyce	Head of Internal Audit - PCC
Jonathan Jardine	Chief Executive - PCC
Peter Gillett	Director of Commercial Services – WMP
Sonia Hussain	Financial Accountant - WMP
Davinder Jagpal	Service Director – Finance - WMP
Melissa Horton	Senior Assurance and Risk Manager – WMP
Fiona Fletcher	HMICFRS Liaison Officer - WMP
Uman Purewal	Audit Portfolio Lead - PCC
Zoe Thomas	Grant Thornton
Richard North	Head of Corporate Development - WMP
Arron Cullen	Strategic Performance Manager - PCC
Simon Down	Head of Policy - PCC

**Plus, one notetaker and one webcaster**

<b>709</b>	<p><b>Item 1 - Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were noted for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jon Darling</li> <li>• Fiona Pook</li> <li>• Laurelin Griffiths</li> <li>• DCC Scott Green</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Item 2 – Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest raised.</p>
	<p><b>Item 3 – Minutes from Previous Meeting</b></p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.</p>

	<p><b>Item 4 – Matters Arising (Not on Agenda)</b></p> <p>There are no matters arising.</p>
	<p><b>Item 5 – HMICFRS Update</b></p> <p><i>Presented by Fiona Fletcher</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The force continues to operate in its default phase of monitoring. There is one remaining cause of concern for Investigations with two open recommendations specific to outcomes that will continue to be addressed ahead of any re-inspection during the 25/27 PEEL assessment programme.</li> <li>• Since the last meeting there have been two HMICFRS reports published, one around case building between the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service and the other around how effectively the Police are recording crime.</li> <li>• Open recommendations continue to reduce and are now at 48. Five have recently been closed, good progress is being made.</li> <li>• The formal inspection window for PEEL 2025/27 begins week commencing 8th September whereby any observations, interviews, reality testing and focus groups taking place after this date will fall within the evidence window.</li> <li>• WMP are anticipating formal notification of inspection on 12th January 2026. The inspection itself will take place in July 2026 for two weeks.</li> </ul> <p>- Sue Davis asked whether the observation of meetings would be operational, or governance based.</p> <p>Fiona Fletcher explained that there is a need to see the thread of governance from the top of the organisation through to how it is represented at an operational level.</p> <p>- Rachel Barber asked whether the target was to have delivered on all past recommendations by the time of the next inspection or whether it was acceptable to have any still in progress?</p> <p>Fiona Fletcher confirmed that the target is to have all recommendations closed prior to the two weeks of activity and certainly by the time the Inspectors come into force in July. If there are any open areas for improvement, the question set would not be able to achieve a grading of 'Good'. Everyone from the DCC down has been briefed on this.</p>
	<p><b>Item 6 – Internal Audit Activity Update Report</b></p> <p><i>Presented by Lynn Joyce</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good progress has been made during the reporting period. There is still an ongoing relationship with the co-sourced provider and four audits have been allocated to them recently.</li> <li>• The team is now reporting the lowest number for a long time with 31 outstanding and 19 of these being medium. There are no high-risk recommendations overdue.</li> <li>• Recommendations are regularly reported into the Commissioning Governance Board and Finance Governance Board and Lynn Joyce offered thanks to Peter Gillett and his team for their support in progressing the recommendations.</li> <li>• The Detained Property recommendations have been closed. The work has been incorporated into Operation Stemson which is now gaining pace and lots of progress has been made. Closure is proposed with a review suggested for next year to provide assurance around the new processes and systems in place.</li> <li>• It is early in the year, but the team are on target to deliver the plan. At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter progress will be assessed to ensure that resources are in place to achieve the plan and the planned activity will be review against the risk profile.</li> </ul>

- Faye Lloyd asked whether it was possible to know which were the four audits that were given to the co-sourced partner.

Lynn Joyce confirmed that the four audits are Bank Reconciliation, VAT, an audit of cyber security and civil contingencies. If helpful, those audits allocated to the co-sourced partner can be drawn out within the report in future.

- Rachel Barber asked about the progress of the plan to date and wondered if she should be overly concerned that the plan is only at 29% this year and queried whether this was a usual position to be in?

Lynn Joyce offered assurance that this is very usual and that the team are ahead of where they have been in the last few years. The first part of the year is quite light in terms as a lot of planning is underway. The final quarter is where the trajectory picks up. It is hoped that at the next time of reporting that this is closer to 50%.

- Paul Donnelly referenced the previously resourcing issues within the team and asked whether there were any deficiencies that may need to be mitigated against and what was being done to make sure this was one?

Lynn Joyce agreed that resourcing had been a problem for the last two years; however, the team is now back to full establishment. There is an arrangement in place with the co-sourced provider to give flexibility across the team. The work of the team is closely monitored and timesheets are completed to ensure that delivery is on track. When the plan is set it is not known what will be found or how much time will be needed as there are lots of new audits, so there needs to be that element of flexibility.

Lynn Joyce provided an update on the Neighbourhood Policing Engagement audit which received Limited assurance:

- Birmingham, Walsall and Solihull LPAs were visited to see how each LPA was preparing and delivering on their engagement strategies.
- Arrangements varied with no consistent approach or central repository for collating information and no way to monitor how commitments within the engagement plans were being delivered.
- Work was underway to correct some of these issues. A new tracker is being established to monitor engagement activity though it didn't offer the information needed to report back to the community. A recommendation was given to explore the interaction both ways.

- Sue Davis said that it would be interesting to see how things develop around this, following concerns from Birmingham City Councillors around the size of Birmingham LPA and the struggles that this may provide for a consistent approach to a community of over a million people.
- Rachel Barber asked, how would the shared learning be distributed across the other LPA areas?

Lynn Joyce explained how the Audit Team are careful not to choose areas that have already been visited and audited before. One report has been produced across the three LPAs, a summary was included in papers for an Away Day that the Force Executive Team was having with LPA Commanders in attendance. The Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing provided an update to all Commanders sharing the outcome of the report.

Jane Heppel added that the audit was timely as the force are delivering on the National Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee and engagement is critical to ensuring that the guarantee is delivered. There will be Home Office dashboards to show the softer elements around engagement and how this feeds into public safety.

Lynn Joyce provided an updated on the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) audit.

- This VAWG Strategy was launched in July 2024 and more progress was expected at the time the audit was completed. The strategy has 11 strands, it is a complex plan and some strands were more developed than others.
- There were similar themes arising from this audit to those mentioned in the Neighbourhood engagement audit in relation to transparency, this is possibly due to the approach taken by the force, i.e. no formal minutes taken, only action plans, which does mean transparency is sometimes lost around decision making.
- It was difficult to track the origin of some actions and within the overall VAWG delivery plan, it was difficult to see how oversight could be maintained. The governance needs strengthening.
- A positive element of the Strategy is the departmental pledges from each force department showing their commitments to the Strategy.

- Faye Lloyd asked what resourcing and support was available across the force and PCC to deliver strategies.

Peter Gillett clarified that following the restructure of the Corporate Development team, he has been cognisant of the need for the right level of support to ensure strategy implementation. The new team ensures the flexibility within the organisation. The DCC has embraced the fact that all internal audit findings can be brought to the Organisational Risk and Learning Board to look at the common themes and where the relevant support is required and ensure the right level of ownership and oversight is in place.

Lynn added that the force is good at writing strategies but that more thought is needed on how the strategies will be delivered, monitored and reported on before they are finalised.

Lynn Joyce provided an update on the Dog Unit audit.

- The service is a specialist area which has undergone a lot of change recently.
- There is a strategic framework for the Unit, covering a wider range of areas, performance, standards, leadership, welfare of dogs etc. The Unit also had a cultural review a few years ago. The audit aimed to take a look at how the unit complied with national standards and how they were taking forward the actions set as part of the strategic framework and cultural assessment.
- Lots of progress made, but the action tracker had fallen out of date. There was currently only one person updating and reporting on the action tracker which meant that if that person were unavailable then evidence may not be recorded fully. Some actions were listed as complete but were still in progress.
- There was duplication in reporting to various boards. It was suggested that there was an overhaul of the governance process and the senior management had also reached this conclusion before the audit was finalised.
- A lot of time was spent interviewing staff on the back of the cultural assessment to get their thoughts on animal welfare, how supported they felt, leadership and performance. While some positive changes were reported and the view that the unit was heading in the right direction, there was some residual concern around trust and confidence.

- Sue Davis asked if the number of dogs and spend could be confirmed?

Peter Gillett confirmed that there were around 85 dogs in the Force.

- Paul Donnelly said that cultural change can be a difficult measure and asked whether there were any restrictions from the people perspective when applying some of these changes?

Peter Gillett agreed that in terms of the culture, where there are specialist units operated as standalone, sometimes issues can arise. There is work nationally that has been implemented locally, and more has been done locally to make these teams part of the broader operations. CS Sarah Burton is the lead for the dog unit and has taken the cultural audit work to look at how to work better with individuals to make them understand that they are part of the broader organisation.

Lynn Joyce provided an update on the Financial Savings Governance audit.

- This audit was conducted by RSM, and the findings are largely around evidencing processes.
  - The report discusses the financial plan being reported to the Accountability & Governance Board, but there was nothing in place setting out how often this item should be reported or what the approval process is.
  - There were no meeting records or action logs held for the budget planning meeting within the force so no evidence of decisions and approvals made. Similarly for portfolio level governance boards, no minutes were taken so it was not possible to confirm scrutiny of savings at those boards.
  - The high rated issue related to the tracking of savings. Historically the force maintained a savings tracker but this was not in place for 2024/25. There was therefore little evidence to how the savings were being achieved.
  - The financial outturn report is not reported at a service level, which is the level at which savings are agreed. Instead, reporting is at subject level making it difficult to track service level savings.
  - The savings tracker has been resurrected and will be reported to Finance Governance Board quarterly.
- Sue Davis noted that the half-yearly management accounts will be viewed by the Committee which will give an opportunity to probe and ensure an increase in oversight, which is welcomed.
  - Rachel Barber asked, several times the consistency of governance and transparency has been mentioned, how assured can we be of the governance structure of the OPCC and WMP and how can this be tested?

Peter Gillett thanked Lynn and her team for the work that had been done on this. For assurance, there is a strong track record of delivery and ensuring financial savings are not only achieved but over-achieved. The importance of tightening up on reporting is showing how important it is to evidence it both internally and externally. The force is keen to ensure that the Committee have the chance to see the half year arrangements. There is a strong approach with the DCC chairing priority-based budgeting process, this is an area that does need to be tightened up though. The broader issue of transparency is not linked to issues with the work ongoing with financial savings, the Organisational Risk and Learning Board is being used to bring all Internal Audit findings through to ensure that they are picked up.

Lynn Joyce added that, with regards to all governance arrangements, the team will always try to observe governance boards to look at contributions and decisions being made in real time.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faye Lloyd asked what arrangements could be expected to see in terms of savings going forward?</li> </ul> <p>Peter Gillett confirmed that a half year update paper will include expenditure against the budget with a section specifically talking about savings in the current financial year, how it is being delivered against, expenditure reductions and how they are being forecasted against.</p>
	<p><b>Item 7 – Joint Code of Governance</b></p> <p><i>Presented by Jane Heppel</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jane apologised to members that the document was not complete in line with the timeline. The document is still being reviewed by the PCC.</li> <li>• A working session is in the diary for November 28<sup>th</sup> to understand where the report is going, the role of the Boards. It is hoped to get the document across the line soon as such a lot of good work has been done on it to date.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sue Davis confirmed that she had spoken to the PCC about this work and advised that she has a meeting with the PCC the day before the working session.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Item 8 – HMICFRS VFM</b></p> <p><i>Presented by Arron Cullen</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to note when looking at the dashboards that the financial data relates to 2024/25, and the crime outcomes relate to 2023/24.</li> <li>• This examines policing costs, how funding is allocated with a focus on WMP and their most similar force groups.</li> <li>• When comparing the data, there are differences between forces, these do not indicate inefficiencies, there may be local context matters at play.</li> <li>• The total net expenditure for WMP for 2024/25 was £734.24m which is the second highest nationally compared to Greater Manchester Police. The total funding that was allocated was £738.59m.</li> <li>• Per capita spend, this sits at £246.31, which is classed in the mid to high ranking. This sits below some of the smaller forces in England and Wales and is an increase of around £11 from last year.</li> <li>• Central Government funding is critical to West Midland Police, it highlights the national grants to large urban force areas.</li> <li>• Most of the force's spending is on officers and staff. When looking at staffing levels per Full Time Equivalent, around 2.584 times equivalent officers per 1000 people across the region.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sue Davis noted that it would be helpful to know which other forces also have regional functions within their offices, could this detail be circulated?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Action:</b> Arron advised that this is not stated within the dashboards but is something that can be followed up post-meeting.</li> <li>• The force sits in the upper to middle range for crime outcomes per officer, this exceeds its peers.</li> <li>• Over the last 12 months, there has been a sizeable reduction in crime, with 20,000 fewer victims.</li> <li>• There has been an increase in positive outcome rates with there being a 4.9% year on year increase.</li> </ul>

- WMP has a high number of calls so there is a huge operational demand on staff. 999 performance as of August 25 sits 4<sup>th</sup> in the country evidencing a strong performance in answering 101 and 999 calls.
- WMPs spending on investigations is the fifth highest nationally.
- In relation to Outliers, the force sits below the averages which does raise questions about long term funding.
- Local policing sits below the average at £54.98 per capita. The new £12.2m Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee will boost neighbourhood officers. The policing model in the West Midlands is locally focussed, it is difficult to compare other forces because of how the funding is distributed.
- Officer costs sits towards the middle to lower end with WMP spending an estimated £63,190 per full time equivalent.
- WMP sits towards the lower end of PCSO staffing levels, with some rural forces having more PCSOs in post.
- In summary, WMP is a high spending, large urban force.

- Sue Davis asked whether there was anything that came as a surprise or anything that made people take a second look to question why it was different?

Arron Cullen explained that it is a difficult dataset to pull out those areas where the force is an outlier. Precept and neighbourhood policing may be two areas to look at as they are lower than other forces.

Jane Heppel added that policing tends to have income increased the same way by Central Government, there was a blip in 2021/22 which was attributed to the way the grant income was treated during the first year of uplift funding.

Peter Gillett added that he has been asked to chair a working group to ensure the right level of governance sits around data collection for the VFM HMICFRS Work. Representatives from the Home Office, HMICFRS, other forces and PCCs make up the group. As a wider observation, nothing sticks out in the report other than the fact WMP do a good job with comparatively less funding.

- Paul Donnelly asked whether reassurance could be given that with the National Policing Guarantee increase, this would lead to local policing outcomes and how would the impact of the investment be evidenced?

Peter Gillett welcomes the increase in numbers, this is something the force have embraced and looked to maximise, though they are still struggling to meet the numbers of officer's pre-austerity. The increase of numbers of officers in neighbourhoods may take a little time due to the time taken to recruit and train new officers. In addition, the Chief Constable has spoken to the Home Office to increase numbers further. There is a lot of governance around what improvements are expected as a result of these new numbers.

Jane Heppel added that the Police & Crime Plan covers all of the same issues and the KPIs will be reported into the Home Office who are developing a dashboard to monitor all forces. This will mean that all data is really visible to ensure there is public visibility and transparency.

Fiona Fletcher added that HMICFRS look at offenders brought to justice. When the force was inspected under PEEL 23/25 West Midlands Police were lowest in the country but are now at 12.91% which is mid-table and moving upwards so shows significant progress.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faye Lloyd asked about how static the position of the force is in the datasets. Is there any movement expected?</li> </ul> <p>Jane Heppel confirmed that unless there is a significant change in the landscape, there won't be any changes.</p> <p>Peter Gillett added that where the position is not static, this would show a continued performance improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faye Lloyd asked how External Audit may use the information included within the Value for Money analysis.</li> </ul> <p>Zoe Thomas added that as part of their own Value for Money work, they would use anything relevant that could be used within their audit work.</p>
	<p><b>Item 9 – Treasury Management Outturn Report</b></p> <p><i>Presented by Sonia Hussain</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest rates started at 5.3% and went down to 4.5%, the current interest rate is 4%. In the last management outturn, it was thought that there would be 3 interest rate cuts however there were only 2.</li> <li>• The interest rate is expected to drop to 3.7% at the end of the financial year.</li> <li>• Interest received for the 2024-25 financial year totalled £8.1m, which was slightly in excess of the forecast of £8m.</li> <li>• As of 31 March 2025, the investment portfolio totalled £75m, invested with a range of maturity dates between instant access and one year, and a further £5m with CCLA property fund with no maturity date.</li> <li>• It has been a good year in investments and paying off loans, as predicted.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faye Lloyd commented on Appendix A and the big gap between 2027 and 2056 maturity dates within nothing maturing in between.</li> </ul> <p>Jane Heppel explained that these were taken before any of those present were in post. It is lucky that they are at a good rate. It is unusual to borrow at such a length in the public sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sue Davis noted that at the treasury management training session members recently attended, there was a lot of interest in what the Treasury Management Strategy was. Do last year's results comply with what the strategy said would be done?</li> </ul> <p>Sonia Hussain confirmed that the strategy is around providing effective management of treasury activities and includes external debt and investment, only using fixed rate investments for the organisation and putting security ahead of yield. When local authority investing takes place, due diligence is carried out to ensure that they are not part of a Section 114 notice.</p>
	<p><b>Item 10 – Revenue &amp; Capital Outturn Reports</b></p> <p><i>Presented by Davinder Jagpal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The paper set out the financial outcomes position for 24/25. Outcomes ended in a good position, through the management of costs in the year to deliver the budget.</li> </ul>

- There was an improved performance in various areas. An underspend was achieved through close management of costs and delivering on savings and priority-based budgeting exercises. There was also some contract re-negotiation.
- Additional income was available, part of which related to treasury management.
- Balance sheets were strengthened along with the reserves position. There are also opportunities for further investment in 25/26 in priority areas.
- With regards to investment in priority areas, there have been improved outcomes in various areas, particularly local policing and within the crime portfolio.
- There has been an increase in the number of arrests, an improvement in call handling, dispatch and response times.
- Additional investments have been made in relation to overtime and making improvements on the back of HMICFRS report.
- The Force continues to maintain police officer uplift numbers. The paper details the Commissioner's capital investments of just under £15m. The underspend around capital is due to the re-profiling taking place.
- With regards to the 2026/27 budget, a deep dive will be undertaken to understand drivers and triggers to build into the budget.
- Whilst the 2024/25 position has been spoken about positively and the resources have been used very well, there are still pressures in the medium term. The comprehensive spending review was positive, but it is still challenging and there is a need to work on how this plays out in operational delivery.

- Paul Donnelly asked how the force is addressing the underspend in the capital investment, especially around Estates and IT. What is the impact on service delivery and how is this being balanced with the savings?

Peter Gillett answered that there is always a phasing issue around capital programme timings, especially Estates. The force has been focussing on the Estates strategy to ensure a strong direction to deliver a solid approach of releasing buildings, if they are not fit for purpose, once alternative site is found. The Chief Constable is hands on in terms of looking at all local buildings to ensure it does reflect the operating model. There was some slippage last year, but the force is doing more than before, specifically sales of surplus assets so capital funding will improve through capital receipts.

- Sue Davis added that at the recent Accountability and Governance Board meeting, the Chief Constable was lauding the current set of investments that had been approved, so it may be useful for the Committee to get an update on this.

**Action:** Peter Gillett to share update on capital investments and their current position.

- Rachel Barber said that it would be good to hear at the next meeting how the force is performing against the budget and also to understand if they are good at project management within the Estate area. There are lots of external factors that can affect delivery, could there be some testing to get some reassurance about project delivery and whether the phasing is well planned.

Peter Gillett confirmed that the force is keen to share information and give assurance where possible. To provide a flavour of the governance in place, Peter meets with the Service Director for Corporate Asset Management and Chief Constable on a fortnightly basis to review all schemes and their timelines to ensure all revised strategies are in place and being delivery. This can be provided in an update moving forward.

Jane Heppel added that the OPCC sit on many project delivery boards such as the recent Dudley station refurbishment as well as those at Wolverhampton and Stechford and are able

	<p>to see the project details. Timing isn't matched when the capital is put in, a cautious approach is taken. All is working well with this approach.</p> <p>Davinder Jagpal added that there is annual monitoring with forecasting to deliver what is being budgeted for. The profiling post-reset has been looked at as well to ensure that the next 3 years have been captured.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faye Lloyd noted that she would welcome a deep dive on this area to understand it further. It was agreed to add this to the action list</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> Deep dive into capital/estates project management to future meeting.</p>
	<p><b>Item 11 – External Audit Joint Audit Findings Report (Year ending 31 March 2025)</b></p> <p><i>Presented by Zoe Thomas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report is a draft and not complete yet. It is currently at 80% but it is not anticipated that any further issues will be found in the audit.</li> <li>• There is always a wait on the assurance from the pension fund auditor, there are assurances that this should arrive in October. It did not hold up the audit last year and is not anticipated to do so this year.</li> <li>• External Audit are looking at the governance around purchases.</li> <li>• There is work ongoing around the valuation of land which is a significant risk because of the value. There are new valuers involved in the process this time who have struggled with the challenge of the valuation.</li> <li>• There are no further concerns raised.</li> <li>• There are some recommendations raised in the report, around admin control and IT arrangements, which reflect the audit approach.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul Donnelly asked for clarification on the difficulties around valuation.</li> </ul> <p>Zoe Thomas confirmed that this was not identifying any weaknesses in the process, just a need to require more information than previously.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faye Lloyd asked what the plans were to address the issues linked to Oracle Cloud and the Payroll app.</li> </ul> <p>Peter Gillet confirmed that it was clear that investment was needed to take the work with the payroll app forward. There is a Gold Group in place to oversee the improvements, the team has been invested in and there are measures in place to look at a long-term solution moving forward, though there is lots still to do.</p> <p>Davinder Jagpal added that there have been resourcing issues which have meant that this has had to be covered in a way to allow tasks to be done. Additional controls have been implemented as a mitigating measure to ensure scrutiny is in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faye Lloyd asked when Payroll had last been audited.</li> </ul> <p>Lynn Joyce confirmed that this was two years ago which resulted in Peter Gillett setting up a Gold Group. Payroll is in the audit plan again this year to check the controls are in place and working.</p> <p>Davinder Jagpal confirmed that the recommendations have been in place for the last 12 months.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sue Davis asked about the management override of controls and how confident management were about how secure things are where there is widespread access.</li> </ul> <p>Peter Gillett answered that in terms of the access controls, it is clear what is needed in relation to the payroll app. With regards to the Oracle Cloud, there is still some strengthening to do, possibly through an update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul Donnelly asked how the force would ensure the audit recommendations in relation to the pension liability disclosures would be implemented and monitored?</li> </ul> <p>Davinder Jagpal confirmed that these had been added to a log and their implementation tracked. Davinder will address this herself with meetings with Lynn as part of the internal audit work.</p>
	<p><b>Item 12 – External Auditor’s Annual Report</b></p> <p><i>Presented by Zoe Thomas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is provisional and meant to be delivered at the end of the work.</li> <li>• The Value for Money field work has been completed.</li> <li>• There are good governance arrangements in place, performance management and other outcomes since the PEEL report.</li> <li>• Improvements have been made around the recommendations around the 3 E’s. This is reflective of the journey the force is on, and the progress made.</li> <li>• All that is left is to complete the opinion audit and update accordingly.</li> </ul> <p>There were no questions from Members.</p>
	<p><b>Item 13 – OPCC Risk Management Progress Update</b></p> <p><i>Presented by Jane Heppel</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report is about two things, the risk of not being able to deliver the Plan and also corporate risks.</li> <li>• There was not a suggestion about the deliverability of the plan by partners, rather about our confidence in the ability of the OPCC to deliver on the plan which is a critical difference.</li> <li>• Items marked as red in the RAG column is because the team cannot progress their items without the involvement of OPCC SMT input.</li> <li>• The KPIs are available via the online Storybook, so progress can be monitored in this way.</li> <li>• Some of the deliverables are out of OPCC control, some are awaiting national guidance or partner involvement.</li> <li>• There is a new corporate risk around the English devolution white paper is going through Parliament. The assumption is that there will be a transfer of police governance to a mayoral combined authority where there is a contiguous border. As things stand, this is expected in the West Midlands. This work has been done before, and the risks have been sighted on so is not a threat to operational every day working.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sue Davis added that this change has been mooted twice previously, and the Committee have stressed concerns about anyone paying attention to what audit functions would look like for policing under a Combined Authority. Sue requested that this was kept within the thinking of the OPCC, and that the Committee were kept appraised.</li> </ul>

Jane Heppel added that the complexity of the transfer would be that the PCC accounts would be part of the Combined Authority, but the police ring fencing would remain in place with the Combined Authority having no decision in approving the accounts. Greater Manchester Police have worked on the demarcation needed, it would be a complication but something that could be worked through.

#### **Item 14 – WMP Risk Management Progress Update**

*Presented by Melissa Horton*

- The next stage of the risk management process is the risk assurance framework which was started in July.
- The team are now reviewing the risks closed in the last six months to examine the data and ensure that the mitigating factors are still effective.
- Lunch and Learn sessions continue to take place focussing on the risk governance process. All sessions are recorded and uploaded to Sharepoint for ease of access.
- No project risks have been closed in the last quarter.
- The financial resilience risk has had a name change to refocus on the long-term sustainability of this risk.
- The Mental Health detentions risk remains, there have been no legal claims to date.
- The Connect nominal match and merge process is nearing conclusion, it has progressed through Phase 4 which resulted in additional updates to the code.
- Under Departmental Risks, the regional IT Connectivity risk has received a recent update with West Mercia taking the required governance change for the AVD technology, this change is awaited before tests can be carried out.
- The Joint Legal Services attrition and demand continues to be a risk. There have been a number of resignations, most recently a Principal Lawyer. Recruitment with an external agency will take place to manage the demand.
- In terms of the closed flags and information availability, this has now been split into three separate issues to help better focus and mitigation. (2 are currently pending approval). A long-term solution is being sourced with the Connect lead and progress is being made with IT. Direction has been given by Force Exec to allow all flag content to be viewed, a full review of user access has been initiated though this will be time consuming.
- There was one increased departmental risk scored as high – the Pensions capability. Mitigations are in place for this risk to allow for training and additional resources to help with demand. A transition plan is being developed to address the issues, and a change case has been submitted.

- Faye Lloyd asked whether exit interviews were conducted with the Solicitors when they leave post? Is this a difficult area to recruit to?

Peter Gillett confirmed that the exit interviews took place to identify any potential issues, but no single theme has appeared. There is a lot of competition in these roles, it is one to keep a strong focus on.

- Paul Donnelly asked about the Connect system and the risks identified around it. Can assurance be given that the mitigation in the paper is taking place?

Melissa Horton confirmed that the nominal match and merge was in phase 5, more detail was provided in the previous report submitted, but in essence more requirements were needed to authenticate against. There was reference to fuzzy characters around reporting which identified one error in Phase 5 which is being worked on. Melissa is not prepared to

close the risk until the issues have been resolved. Phase 6 will be the final review process. The full report will hopefully be available at the next meeting.

Peter Gillett added that the process is overseen by ACC Welsted through the Data Assurance Board which has a lot of overall scrutiny.

- Paul Donnelly asked whether there was a timeframe around the long-standing CITRIX risk?

Melissa Horton advised that as this is a more regional risk around IT connectivity, there is a reliance on partners. West Mercia now have things in place at their end. It is hoped this is more likely to be months than longer.

Melissa Horton updated on the Strategic Risks

- Funding grants focusses specifically on shortfalls in grants for WMP. Updates are received quarterly against specific grants, the current grant at risk is the County Lines grant, the mitigation is several staff on permanent contracts before the funding potentially ends in March.
  - Misinformation, disinformation or non-factual reporting within the media and social media – this heightens community tensions and causes social disruption. Corporate Comms have access to the III team in Intel, so they are able to authenticate images and footage in minutes to allow the team to respond with authority. The risk is reviewed with the owner to understand the risk levels.
  - Community tensions and politics – this was originally raised under Op Biotas which identified organisational learning for delivery in the organisation. A recent review was undertaken, and the portfolio is being reviewed to ensure the content is relevant.
  - Net Zero Ambition - there are external consultants in force probing data and analytics of the vehicles and infrastructure as well as delivery across the Estates strategy. Additional options are being explored locally and nationally for sources of funding for installation of EV charging points. Only 80 vehicles in the force's fleet of 2000 are electric.
  - Fraud investigation and prevention – this has been raised with the inclusion of fraud in the HMICFRS PEEL framework. For assurance, the force has an Economic Crime Unit (ECU) which has specialist officers trained in appropriate governance within the force structure. There is an established framework and now an action plan for improvements.
  - The force is in a position now where all new AI tech is developed in line with GDPR. The framework that has been developed will identify risks with AI tools.
  - Police Powers – disproportionality is governed through the PEEL framework. In relation to this, there is an updated stop & search learning package where compliance rates are monitored and retention on body worn cameras has now been increased to 12 months rather than 12 weeks. The data for recording through Stop & Search is good.
  - Criminal Justice strain – Receipts into the CPS continue to rise.
- Paul Donnelly noted the challenges faced around AI and asked whether the Force had a specific unit or taskforce to keep up pace with AI? Also, what is the forces response to the risks posed?

Peter Gillett confirmed that there is no specific unit that has been established, but colleagues within IT&D are aware of AI. There are huge possibilities for the force to use AI, a force AI Strategy is in development based on the national police AI strategy approach. ACC Welsted sits on the National AI Steering Group. The force is looking to ensure that they adopt AI Tools as promptly as they can but recognise they all require appropriate National

	<p>Technology Council sign off before doing so. Fortunately, one of WMP's IT Senior Leadership Team sits on the Council area which focusses on AI, so the force is well positioned to be able to benefit from these tools but only do so when the appropriate levels of accreditation are received. The force has also done a lot of work developing their own solutions, such as Andi- Esra, which has supported the approach to call handling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faye Lloyd questioned whether AI being noted as a Medium on the Risk Register feels correct. It is a threat, risk and opportunity so does Medium do it justice?</li> </ul> <p>Peter Gillett said that this is a discussion that is had in the force regularly. At the moment, they are content with where it sits but will keep it under review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rachel Barber noted that Cyber Security doesn't get a specific mention, as there are a number of high-profile cases at the moment, can it be confirmed if this has been missed and if it is not flagging as high-risk, should it be?</li> </ul> <p>Peter Gillett said that this is something regularly discussed at Commercial Services Board, and it is a case of 'when' and not 'if' these things happen. IT are prepared for these situations and are not complacent. This features in the IT risk with the potential to raise to a high risk.</p> <p>Melissa Horton said that she is sure it is listed within the register somewhere, potentially amalgamated with another item of IT, this will be reviewed to confirm where it best sits.</p>
	<p><b>Item 15 – JAC Work Programme</b></p> <p><i>Presented by Sue Davis</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This item is just for noting, there are no changes noted.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Date of the next meeting:</b></p> <p>Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025</p>