

REPORT OF THE DYFED-POWYS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL PERFORMANCE SUB-GROUP

Review of how the Commissioner performs his statutory duty to maintain an efficient and effective Police Force

Section A - Background

1. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and the Policing Protocol Order 2023 require Police and Crime Panels to support the Police and Crime Commissioner in the performance of his statutory functions. One of those functions is to maintain an efficient and effective police force in the area for which they are the Commissioner.
2. The Panel identified consideration of how the Commissioner performs this function as one of its priorities for the 2023-2024 municipal year and delegated the work to a subgroup of members (“the Performance subgroup”)
3. The Performance subgroup consists of the following members

Professor Ian Roffe*	Independent Co-opted Member
Mrs Helen Thomas	Independent Co-opted Member
Councillor Ken Howell	Carmarthenshire County Council
Councillor William Powell	Powys County Council
Councillor Simon Hancock	Pembrokeshire County Council
Councillor Liz Rijnenberg	Powys County Council
Councillor Wyn Thomas	Ceredigion County Council
Councillor Jonathan Grimes	Pembrokeshire County Council

*Chair of the Performance Subgroup and the full panel.

4. The objectives of the Panel in undertaking this piece of work are set out in the Panel’s Annual Report for 2022-2023 and were to achieve an understanding of how the Commissioner has been able to influence the efficiency and effectiveness Dyfed-Powys Police and what he could do to improve things further. The intended outcome for this piece of work was for the Panel to be able to determine whether the Commissioner has satisfied the requirement to maintain efficient and effective police force.

5. In undertaking this piece of work the subgroup placed a particular emphasis on three main lines of enquiry. These were.
 - (a) The oversight the Commissioner exercises in relation to the engagement that Dyfed-Powys Police has with the public, and how accessible Dyfed-Powys Police is to the public.
 - (b) The oversight the Commissioner exercises in relation to the vetting, training, health and well-being of police officers and civilian staff.
 - (c) What has been achieved in delivering the priority in the Police and Crime Plan regarding the prevention of harm.
6. The Policing Protocol Order 2023 reiterates that the operational independence of the police is a fundamental principle of British policing. **This is a reminder that the role of the Panel, and the aim of this piece of work, is to scrutinise and support the Commissioner, not Dyfed-Powys Police.**

Section B - What have we done.

7. In undertaking this work, subgroup members have met with and received presentations from representatives of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Dyfed-Powys Police. Subgroup members, as part of their wider role on the Panel, have also.
 - (a) Attended meetings of the Police and Crime Panel, questioned the Commissioner and scrutinised decisions that he has made.
 - (b) Observed Policing Accountability Board meetings between the Commissioner and the Chief Constable.
 - (c) Reviewed publicly available information regarding the effectiveness of Dyfed-Powys Police.

Section C – Vetting, Training and Health and Well-being

Vetting

8. The vetting of police officers has gained considerable media attention in recent years, culminating in the Baroness Casey Review published in March 2023. The duty to ensure that police officers and civilian staff are properly vetted rests with the Chief Constable, not the Commissioner. Given the significant public interest that exists in ensuring that police officers and staff are properly vetted it is however appropriate that the Commissioner exercises close oversight in respect of this issue.
9. The subgroup was informed that in accordance with requirements issued by the Home Office in 2023 all officers and staff have been re-vetted, which involved the examination of 11,865 records.

Following this exercise, it was determined no current serving member of Dyfed-Powys Police presented a concern that required further intervention.

10. The Commissioner has maintained oversight of this process through his regular scrutiny of the Chief Constable at Policing Board meetings, including holding Policing Board meetings with a particular focus on Professional Standards. Moving forward, we were informed that the Commissioner's Office will exercise further oversight by observing meetings of Vetting Panels organised by the force and the dip sampling of vetting decisions. In addition, the Commissioner's Office intends to conduct scrutiny activity which will focus on the force's culture.
11. At the time of preparing this report the inspection of the Dyfed-Powys Police's vetting and counter-corruption arrangements by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) had not been completed and this was not therefore the subject of any findings in the most recent police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) report.

Training

12. Ensuring officers and staff are adequately trained for their roles is an essential requirement for any police force. The subgroup was provided with information regarding both initial training for warranted (police) officers and PCSOs as well as further training for CID officers, leadership and divisional training in areas such as missing persons, domestic abuse, and forensic awareness. In addition, the force also provides specialist training for police drivers, the dog and marine sections, and for officers trained in other specialist roles such as the use of Tasers, public order and protest removal. Such training is refreshed on a regular basis as would be expected. As a Panel subgroup it is not our role to comment on the adequacy of the training provided by the force, nor are we qualified to do so. We do note however that the training requirements necessarily divert officers away from the performance of their duties and therefore do reduce the number of officers available for deployment at any one time.
13. As with vetting, the responsibility for ensuring that police officers and civilian staff are suitably trained rests with the Chief Constable not the Commissioner. The Commissioner would however be reasonably expected to satisfy himself that those training arrangements meet the needs of the force. We understand that the Commissioner does this by his office monitoring the progress of training programmes. We consider this to be an appropriate and proportionate approach.
14. Whilst a comprehensive training programme certainly seems to be in place, the most recent report by His Majesty's Inspectorate of

Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) “*PEEL 2023-2025 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy, an Inspection of Dyfed-Powys Police*” did identify on pages 41 and 42 that improvement was required to ensure that supervisors have the necessary training and skills to carry out their roles and that the force should consider its personal development review process to ensure it is effective and valued by officers and staff.

15. The Commissioner’s statutory response to that report highlighted the steps that had been taken to address these issues and the oversight that he was exercising.

Health and Well-being

16. Dyfed-Powys Police has adopted a Well-being Strategy which emphasises the importance of taking care of the health and well-being of its staff. The force also embraces the College of Policing’s ‘Blue Light Well-being Framework’. The force has its own in-house occupational health team and can access specialist advice if needed.
17. It must again be stressed that responsibility for ensuring the health and well-being of police officers and staff rests with the Chief Constable, not the Commissioner. We would however expect a responsible Commissioner to exercise appropriate oversight of this issue and to hold the Chief Constable to account in respect of it.
18. Whilst the force clearly has systems in place to support officers in this regard the most recent report by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) “*PEEL 2023-2025 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy, an Inspection of Dyfed-Powys Police*” did identify the balancing of operational need with supporting the welfare of officers and staff as an area requiring improvement. The report also commented upon the limited awareness of staff of the range of well-being measures provided by the force and the improvements that have been made to the force’s Occupational Health Unit.
19. Again, the Commissioner’s statutory response to the report highlights the steps that have been taken to address these issues by the force and the oversight that the Commissioner exercises in this regard. We note that information provided by the Chief Constable in this regard will be used by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to inform the next Police and Crime Plan and future Medium Term Financial Plans.

Section D – Public Engagement and Accessibility

20. As society has changed, the way in which the Police engage with the public and how the public access the police has changed also.

The Commissioner's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2024-2025 identifies that Dyfed Powys Police are responsible for the largest geographical force area in England and Wales with a population of 518,062 "*spread across extensive rural areas, holiday and market towns and more heavily populated areas*" In certain areas population density is significantly impacted by seasonal tourism and term time students in our university towns. The subgroup recognises that these factors can significantly impact upon public engagement with and accessibility to the police.

21. Panel members have received a number of presentations regarding the operation of the force control centre and the '999' and '101' telephone lines and have also had the opportunity to question the Commissioner about this topic. Again, these matters fall within the operational remit of the Chief Constable but it is entirely appropriate that the Commissioner exercises a close oversight of them.
22. The most recent report by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) "*PEEL 2023-2025 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy, an Inspection of Dyfed-Powys Police*" identified increasing the accessibility of neighbourhood policing teams and improving how the force communicates with local people as areas for improvement. The report also identified as an area for improvement the need to improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls and reduce the number of non-emergency calls that are abandoned by callers. The report noted that during the period May 2022 to April 2023 25.9% of 101 (non-emergency) calls to the force were abandoned. This accords with the experiences of subgroup members and their constituents.
23. Again, the Commissioner's response to the report highlighted the steps being taken to address these issues and how he intends to hold the Chief Constable to account in respect of them. The subgroup also notes that the increased police precept for 2024/2025 included specific provision for greater funding of the force control centre to improve call handling response times.

Section E – The Police and Crime Plan Priority of preventing harm.

24. The prevention of harm is identified as one of 3 priorities in the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan. On page 9 of the Plan the Commissioner sets out how we will we know whether success has been achieved in delivering that priority. This includes (a) A reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour in all communities. (b) A reduction in violence against women and girls. (c) A reduction in the threat of Serious Organised Crime and Exploitation. (d) Safer communities through reducing fear of crime. (e) Listening and

- dealing with local community priorities. (f) Developing relationships with young people through forum and engagement activities. (g) Prevention services for young people, which are effective at reducing risk and harm. (h) How effective Dyfed-Powys Police are at protecting vulnerable people and (i) the impact against the Fatal Five causes of road accidents.
25. The most recent report by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) "*PEEL 2023-2025 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy, an Inspection of Dyfed-Powys Police*" rated the force as 'adequate' in respect of preventing and deterring crime and anti-social behaviour and reducing vulnerability. Although the report identified the areas for improvement set out in paragraph 22 above, it also confirmed that the force understands and tackles anti-social behaviour and is effective at identifying high-harm crime, supporting victims and reducing re-offending.
 26. The PEEL report, at page 6, contains a 'Reducing Crime Assessment' which highlights the areas of good practice and areas requiring improvement revealed by the inspection. The assessment does not include police-recorded crime figures as the HMICFRS considers that these can be affected by variations and changes in recording policy and practice which can make it difficult to make comparisons over time.
 27. The subgroup therefore considers the overall rating by the HMICFRS of 'adequate' in respect of preventing crime, anti-social behaviour and reducing vulnerability to be a strong indicator that the priority of preventing harm is being achieved at least to an extent.

Section F – The most recent HMICFRS inspection report

28. The most recent HMICFRS 'PEEL' inspection report has provided the subgroup with a very helpful independent assessment of the performance of Dyfed-Powys Police. PEEL reports rate police forces in different areas of policing and grade performance as either 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Adequate', 'Requires Improvement' and 'Inadequate'.
29. The most recent inspection assessed the force in 9 areas of policing. Of these 9 areas, 7 were graded as 'adequate' and 2 as 'requiring improvement'. The 2 areas requiring improvement were protecting vulnerable people and developing a positive workplace.
30. Overall, these grades appear to indicate a decline in performance compared to the position recorded in the HMICFRS publication the '*State of Policing - The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2022*' when the force received a number of 'good' ratings.

31. However, as the recent and tragic controversy surrounding OFSTED inspection reports in England highlighted, the practice of regulators seeking to encapsulate the assessment of performance by means of a single word grade is not without its flaws and can easily fail to convey the nuances of a complex and difficult set of circumstances.
32. As far as the subgroup has been able to ascertain no police force has ever been rated as 'outstanding' or 'Good' across all areas of policing assessed following a HMICFRS inspection. Therefore, whilst the ratings in the most recent report may be considered disappointing compared with previous inspections, they nevertheless reflect that Dyfed-Powys Police is performing adequately across the majority of areas inspected. In the view of the subgroup a police force whose performance is largely rated as adequate is a police force which is largely efficient and effective.

Acknowledgements

33. The sub group would like to acknowledge the considerable help and assistance that they received in undertaking this piece of work from the following officers and representatives of Dyfed-Powys Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Ifan Gruff, Chief Inspector Jackie Lovett, Gareth Scanlon, Claire Bryant, Donna Cronin, Linda Williams, Acting Inspector Teleri Bowen, Temporary Chief inspector Jenna Jones and Carys Morgans.

Conclusions

34. Whilst there are clear areas for improvement, the predominantly 'adequate' ratings issued by the HMICFRS in the most recent PEEL report provide strong evidence that Dyfed-Powys Police is an efficient and effective force overall. Crime rate data and public satisfaction levels appear to corroborate this view.
35. The subgroup is satisfied that the Commissioner exercises close oversight of force performance and holds the Chief Constable to account in this regard, whilst observing the operational independence of the latter.
36. Accordingly, the Subgroup is satisfied that the Commissioner is fulfilling his statutory duty to maintain an efficient and effective police force in Dyfed-Powys.

Recommendations

The subgroup makes the following recommendations to the Panel.

1. That the Panel continues to scrutinise how the Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account in relation to issues of staff well-being during the 2024-2025 municipal year through attendance at Policing Accountability Board meetings.
2. That the Panel ask the Commissioner to present a report at a Panel meeting during 2024/2025 detailing the steps taken by the Commissioner to ensure the issues identified in the HMICFRS report are addressed and the progress that has been made.