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**APPROVED - MINUTES  
AUDIT AND ASSURANCE BOARD (AAB)  
NOVEMBER 21ST, 2023**

**PRESENT:**

|                      |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Barbara Scott (BS)   | AAB Chair       |
| Gavin Stephens (GSt) | NPCC Chair      |
| John Campion (JC)    | PCC West Mercia |
| Katy Bourne (KB)     | PCC Sussex      |
| Gareth Wilson (GW)   | CPOSA           |
| Seonaid Taylor (ST)  | Home Office     |

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Phillip Golding (PG) | APCC, CEO  |
| Louise Bailey (LB)   | DARA Internal Audit                              |
| Sanjay Thakkar       | DARA Internal Audit                              |
| Gemma Stannard (GS)  | NPCC Head of NPCC Strategic Hub                  |
| Tracy Holyer (TH)    | NPCC Head of Organisational Development & Change |
| Lee Milton (LM)      | NPCC Strategic Risk and Planning Manager         |
| Angela Connolly (AC) | NPCC Business Support Lead                       |
| Padraig Twomey (PT)  | NPCC Financial Analyst                           |
| Andy Begent (AB)     | NPCC Data Protection Officer                     |
| Clare Gardner (CG)   | NPCC AAB Secretariat (minutes)                   |
| Loan Vu (LV)         | NPCC Business Support (observer)                 |

**APOLOGIES:**

|                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Janice Shardlow (JS) | Independent Member |
| David Bowles (DB)    | Independent Member |

**1.) WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES, AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were noted with acknowledgment that independent members' advance comments had been received and, would be addressed and incorporated as part of the record when appropriate.

**2.) MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

**2.1 Minutes:**

Minutes of the previous AAB meeting held September 19, 2023, were agreed as a true record and can now be published on the NPCC website.

### 3.) FINANCE

#### 3.1 Financial Improvement Plan (FIP):

GS updated members on the two remaining FIP open actions:

- FIP-22 –second round of financial workshops are being conducted throughout November. It is anticipated that FIP-22 will be proposed to close at next AAB.
- FIP-24 Part 1 – Work is ongoing by MPS to review plans once existing contract ends with SSCL (including PSOP). NPCC and MPS Chief Financial Account in regular communication to ensure NPCC requirements are considered. Part 1 will remain open while this work continues. Part 2 – as per FIP-22.

KB asked for further clarity around the end date for Part 2 of FIP-24. GS updated that, as per FIP-22, NPCC were delivering the second round of workshops and on target to complete early December. Regarding JS's submitted query - training will then become part of new employees' induction / CPD as a BAU process.

BS noted that FIP-22 and FIP-24 had in fact developed organically and were a positive outcome of the NPCC's own internally developed financial self-assessment.

#### 3.2 NPCC Quarterly Financial Statement and Reserves position:

PT explained to members that the Q2 forecast had been built to include the 7% pay award, recruitment vacancies, and more detail on non-pay lines. It is anticipated that Q3 forecast will further look into aspects of the expected out turn position. With regard to budgets PT highlighted to members:

- There is £693k underspend across all the portfolios and their respective areas of funding.
- A key area under scrutiny is the central office's legal cost budget, especially around the Covid Public Inquiry (CPI). Earmarked reserves (which had been included in the budget bid at the start of the year) of £80k alongside £80k for general legal counsel is planned to cover the cost pressures.
- General reserve level is at 1.77% of the net revenue expenditure budget.
- PRAP – with reference to JS's submitted query around the recruitment timelines as there had been large underspends year-to-date, PT informed that resourcing for Q3 and Q4 has now been secured with the exception of two roles. Candidates' onboarding process is now being progressed by HR. The forecast for Q2 remains conservative with these underspends now aligning to workstreams and expected to report at Q3.
- Pensions Team – of the £1.75m planned disbursement to be made to forces, this had been revised down to £1.25m. The process has started and is due to be completed before the end of the calendar year.
- Outstanding payment due from the Home Office (HO) for Chief Scientific Advisor has now been addressed satisfactorily and the matter has been resolved. Payment to NPCC is now expected by early December.
- VAWG – grant funding only was showing at Q1 and PCC contributions are now added.
- KB asked regarding the 7% pay award included in Q2, how was this being paid for in terms of funding? PT informed that 2.5% had originally been included in the budget planning and, that the difference has been met through vacancy management.
- KB enquired about how the legal cost around Covid Inquiry is reviewed. PT and GS informed that regular liaison is taking place with MPS legal and NPCC to ensure a tighter forecast aligned to the expected differing phases of the P.I. and the status of NPCC in these is regularly

undertaken. The initial forecast had been understated as subsequent case management discussions determined that upfront legal work should be expanded to deliver and improve cost efficiencies for the phasing.

- KB with reference to ICT services hardware and expenses - asked what 'expenses' covered? PT informed these comprised costs incurred for NPCC team and staff - travel, subsistence, office expenses, stationery. ICT expenditures are on contracted hardware items with PDS.
- ST referred back to the 7.% pay rise and acknowledged that the mid-year award's timing had been problematic for planning 'the difference' and, recognised this would be addressed in the 2024/25 budget. ST asked if there was an alternate plan, other than managing through vacancies? PT explained that the finance team would be conservative when factoring attrition, affordability and other financial parameters.
- Referring back to KB's query on expenses and JS's submitted enquiries, GS gave further assurance and clarification regarding:
  - On expenses, GS explained that staffing is predominately seconded personnel from throughout the whole of the UK and NPCC pay for occasional travel to events and meetings (not work commuting) and are carefully managed and cost justified to avoid unnecessary expenditures.
  - On pay award 7%, the NPCC is still awaiting confirmation on its awaited grant award to be able to accurately factor the '4.5% difference' but it is anticipated this will be subsumed.

PT concluded with a round up on headline activities post paper circulation reporting that:

- The issuing of funding invoices to PCCs and other signatories had now completed and the process was much improved over recent years.
- Work is required with procurement colleagues on system setups pertaining to the estates move.
- Extension of NPCC contract with PDS continues.
- SOTERIA's grant variation for the Home Office work continues.
- Work plans are being developed for Hydrant's imminent transition to NPCC.

KB asked for clarification regarding the £1.75m force distribution. For context and assurance, PT gave background on this historic pension matter. Summarily, it now having been on a two years plus reporting cycle (with initial balance of £2.14m); a standard agenda finance item with timely reporting on conducted reviews and negotiations to the now re-figured reduction to £1.25m. The distribution formulae had also been agreed. BS commented on this now being a ringfenced figure which PT confirmed.

### 3.3 Financial Review Update

The Board were asked to note and review the paper on the work currently taking place. IM provided members with a summary on JS's submitted comment on the paper's quality, content and clarity and invited further comment from the board.

KB commented on the large number of projects, their requisite funding and sought clarification on 'if and how' a prioritisation criteria is used. IM outlined that all Chiefs have been asked to complete a survey asking for their views on funding and need to continue. Scrutiny panel interviews are also completed with each funding bid area and this collectively will inform the discussion at December's CCC. GS also confirmed that as part of the bid process, all areas were asked to outline how the funding bid aligned to strategic priorities and assess (against a series of criteria) looking at areas such as threat to public confidence, risk, and strategic delivery. GSt outlined how the National Operating Budget had

historically been made up of many parts with forces being subjected to separate bid processes throughout the year. Now, projects are consolidated with a matured cohesive approach. Chiefs will be better and fully informed to facilitate forces receiving a scrutinised and auditable NRE percentage contribution benefitting forces' midterm financial planning. The exercise had been designed thoroughly and has taken us a good way toward closing the gaps.

ST commented on the robust process development so far, and encouraged further thoughts around those projects that include productivity, efficiencies and future savings. Also, to look in the round, at the balance between money spent last year and this.

JC spoke to AAB's future anticipated work in this area around how *prioritisation* works and commented budgets are being squeezed, especially around non-police officer pay. Investment in policing directly links to how police forces deliver savings on efficiencies or, by contributing to desired outcomes being delivered. JC can see progress but has concerns that short-termism only is being considered.

GS informed on this piece of work that:

- national discussion for 2024/25 will also include next phases to ensure robust process and longer term efficiencies are considered and implemented.
- Wider learning around analysis prioritisation across each budget area is to be captured.

## **AUDIT**

### **4.1 DARA Internal Audit update:**

LB gave an overview of DARA's Annual Assurance Report with special reference to the risk opinion (a required reporting line). The report provides assurance on the positive outcomes from strengthening risk's forward direction.

Overall the oversight of delivery against objectives continues to improve. Especially, now that appointed boards are better embedded in comparison to last year's Report. DARA commented on the fact that activity following the cyber audit has now been rolled out by the ODC team.

Plans for next year's audit include scoping a review of funded programme governance, with a deeper dive into accountability and decision making structures. This will assist to inform and identify further areas requiring better and more cost effective streamlining.

With no queries forthcoming from members, BS commented on the large amount of work delivered contained within the Report. GS noted, with reference to JS's submitted comment around the need for NPCC to focus on assurance that, NPCC were mindful and focussed on this area and the planned audit on governance would assist.

### **4.2 DARA Recommendations – Update.**

TH provided members with an update on progress on the ICT recommendations (ICT-01 to 03 inclusive) with recommendation these remain open while work continues. As reported at agenda item 7.6) full closure on ICT-04 is on track and expected to be closed at next reporting cycle.

TH updated the board on the Cyber Security Governance (CSG) recommendations CSG-01 to 08. CSG01 – awaits the imminent publication of National Cyber Security Strategy to which it will be aligned and delivered. A key delivery theme across all CSG recommendations is around the delivery of the SyAP

which is being actively progressed. A new ODC team member focussed on digital, data and technology (including information assurance) has now been appointed to lead work in this area, working in conjunction with the Data Protection Officer and risk manager.

TH reported that for CSG-08 independent assurance –PDS have confirmed their compliance with ISO 27001 and are reporting into the Police Information Assurance Board on compliance.

JS had submitted a comment around the update that, she was content with the current position on the recommendations but, that the number of high risk areas must continue to be prioritised. TH gave assurance that this is considered as a key part of the Delivery Plan.

## **5.0 HUB**

### **5.1 Delivery Plan Update**

LM informed on progress achieved on the overarching objectives with the majority still expected to close at financial year cycles end.

In total, 22 delivery actions have been reported as delayed. For which LH gave highlights on:

- Criminal Justice, these being in the main being outside of NPCC's control on national delivery timelines;
- National Policing Strategy for Economic Crime now due to be published at the end of the year; national and local work continues around vetting and awaits final consultation work from CoP;
- NPCC key policies are now located on SharePoint and work prioritised;
- Coordination Committee Review – desk top review of Local Policing taking place as part of November's AAB meeting.
- Digital Data and Technology actions have made good progress with arrival of the new senior manager in ODC;
- Risk Management Framework (RMF) continues to rollout.

JC asked of GSt if this is an effective tool for getting delivery achieved for chiefs. GSt explained there are differing views with chiefs on this. However, the work NPCC is delivering around risk is proving effective to keep focus but not quite mature enough yet to give a definitive answer to JC. Views of AAB and other forums are welcomed. JC recognised the worth and welcomed GSt's observations around avoiding bureaucracy.

### **5.2 Local Policing Coordination Committee (LPCC) - Desk Top Review**

BS tabled the item and also referred to JS's submitted comments. BS asked of members how did they find the process and, were they able to satisfy themselves on the criteria set in relation to the purpose of this review?

JC made a general observation on it being difficult to ascertain whether the work of the LPCC is purposeful and strategic. Activity well reported but linking back to the 'so what' was not clear.

BS observed that the information provided was comprehensive and a well put together pack, perhaps too much information, as not all necessary for AAB. BS recapped that this review's purpose was to check appropriate framework and delivery processes were in place; ensure appropriate mechanisms were in place to identify and manage risk; and most importantly allow the AAB to consider how and whether the committee's work delivers in line with the NPCC's Strategic Delivery Plan. BS suggested

that, moving forward the criteria that AAB set should be both appropriate and within its terms of reference, this criteria should then be provided to Committees as their remit to focus their presentations.

GS spoke to DB's and JS's comments and reflections that some of the papers were operational and overly detailed and the Board agreed this perhaps led to questions that were not in the remit for AAB.

- JS had asked regarding Appendix 1 No. 26) is there an update around key achievements. GS enquired whether the Board wished that to be taken away but this was not actioned by AAB. Around mental health, the withdrawal of police service and its implications were not clear from the COP material provided. For noting also, the Single Control Mechanism Appendix 2 – appears vague and wanted to know what action had been taken. On Risk, JS had asked are the control methods sufficient to control the risk.
- DB too had commented on several areas detailed within the papers and that he had found them to be clear and helpful. He commented that the risk work is paying off. Commitment to forces, benefits realisations, lack of clarity on body worn video and DB's other points and queries were also noted by AAB.

Members recognised that this 'level of detail' was not required to the criteria set under AAB's ToR. BS reiterated that AAB are required to receive timely assurance that, coordination committees are indeed working and aligned to NPCC agreed delivery plan and suggested that, with this being the first review and, with the imminent arrival of a new AAB Chair that, the next planned review due February 2024 should be deferred. As a takeaway from this first test review, the AAB need to be much clearer on its criteria by making some adjustments for the next deep dive around reporting being non-operational and how AAB set the remit for scrutiny.

GS commented that the committee structure is not only to facilitate NPCC delivery objectives on business planning, that it is also a tool for corralling plans across government changes and incorporated overseas and international policing matters.

AAB agreed to defer the next deep dive until the new chair had gone through a full induction and suggest that May 2024 may be a more appropriate time to start the next deep dive.

### 5.3 NPCC Staff Survey

GS presented the NPCC's first staff survey. An initial poll has been undertaken to determine appetite and topics of interest. The first survey had focused on Employment, Learning and Development. Of the 64 responses received findings included:

- 90% of staff feel proud to work for the NPCC and over 80% would recommend it as a place to work;
- staff feel they have good relationships with their line managers and peers;
- colleagues are trusted and seen as having the ability to do their roles;
- most people have engaged in at least one learning and development opportunity and been positive about it;
- staff feel they have a good work/life balance and see the NPCC as a positive place to work.

A number of areas had been identified for improvement, work continues to develop a supportive and consistent culture. As a result of the survey, the People Delivery Group and SLT plan to:

- continue to invite feedback to better understand the issues;
- raise awareness of existing online training opportunities and encourage staff to utilise these;

- extend the roll out of Supportive Leadership training;
- make coaching training available and look to develop a coaching network.

The next staff survey will focus on Organisational Culture where, we are looking to maintain some of the questions asked in round one, to begin to track results whilst being cognisant around survey fatigue. BS commented that it was a very thorough first survey with encouraging results. GS confirmed the survey had been shared with Chiefs. GS also highlighted JS's comments about being NPCC as an aspirational place to work and how to further promote this – something which is being done through forums such as police staff network.

PG was impressed with the results and asked about the 'how' on measurement of improvement and core questions. GS thanked and recognised SPP team effort on this work explaining that PG's points had been considered when crafting the second survey and sharing would be most welcome.

GW enquired as to regular review of the process and GS assured members that this had been built into the process as a whole. BS pointed out 'temperature taking' was being adopted in this work area.

#### **5.4 Home Office Grant Governance Reporting - Circulated as an information-paper.**

KB asked about item at No. 17 at Q2 in the embedded document for which, TH informed that the Home Office were developing a commissioning process which is now subsumed into the larger delivery landscape programme. PG confirmed that this is a major piece of work with APCC involvement.

#### **5.5 Hub Sustainable Funding**

TH explained that the paper focussed on contingency planning as the board had requested at the previous meeting. Three possible outcomes have been examined and presented to the HO:

1. No growth model – where we continue to receive £3.6m for next financial year.
2. Reduction of funding down to £2.25m resulting in significant impact on reduction of service to police, Home Office and wider NPCC functions.
3. Reduction to £1.8m – would result in an unviable hub and reducing down to a skeletal support team for the NPCC Chair and running of Council.

For contingency planning purposes outcomes 2) and 3) would both require downsizing planning to be implemented. Equality and impact assessment and transparent plans have, and would continue to be considered. A clear policy approach on managing and filling remaining roles is being developed. Of the current 66 staff, 14 are unlikely to be affected, with a further 20 on fixed term contract of which only a small number have served more than 2 years. A further 31 staff are on secondments for which notice periods will have to be accounted for. Early indications - costs between £200k to £300k should redundancies. TH confirmed that whilst NPCC is awaiting the grant decision, positive engagement with the HO continues.

JS's comments echoed NPCC's outcomes 2) and 3) noting that, this would be a significant loss of publicly invested money. BS thanked TH for an excellent paper and that it clearly laid out exactly what the board had asked for. KB enquired about letter enclosures to the Policing Minister and asked these to be reshared.

BS thanked the team for a good report and confirmed that this was in line with what had been requested for some time. BS enquired on the timeline for outcomes to be decided and embedded. GSt informed that, a decision is expected late December/Jan.

Members discussed worst case scenario planning implications for PCCs. JC spoke on the timings generating additional pressures as funding parties will then be well entrenched with their financial planning. Also, that the HO should be encouraged to recognise this outcome(s) were a result of split funding model.

## 5.6 ICT Contract

TH referred back to the earlier DARA recommendation updates' relevance to this agenda item and updated members.

- The extension to the current contract has been completed with work in progress to renew the current ICT contract post Jan 2024.
- Contract documents are in draft form and include improvements in service delivery wherever possible.
- Anticipating an 18-month contract to commence from February 2024.

Full procurement timescales and planning for beyond 2025 next steps:

- To complete the work on the renewal for 2024-25
- To timeline a tender process for the IT provision beyond July 2025.

KB referred to the PDS delay reported and asked for status update. GS informed members that a letter from the NPCC Chair had been sent to the CEO of PDS setting out implications and risk for NPCC for this delay. A response is awaited. GSt assured that PDS Board would be noticed of the letter should resolution(s) sought not be secured in a timely manner via the already open CEO channel.

## 5.7 NPCC Strategic Plan

LM updated members on the ongoing refresh of the SPP Plan since inception under the prior NPCC Chair. The refresh links also to funding, priorities, outcomes and measures as covered in earlier agenda items, and discussion. Language and tone of the document are also being brought up to date. KB enquired of the core values, key mission statements and approach to planning and if this was shared with APCC at planning stages. GSt explained the process and confirmed PCC colleagues were involved throughout.

## 6. RISK

### 6.1 NPCC Quarterly Risk Update

LM reported that the redesign of the risk register process, along with the risk management framework and strategic approach that had been reported at previous AAB meetings, is expected to be presented at Council in the new calendar year. AAB will also have sight. Care has been taken with redesign to scope current landscape and streamline captured data to avoid industrial approach and bureaucracy.

Risk management forum continues with peer network and efficiencies and training opportunities are being identified. APCC, the CoP and the wider policing family are part of the growing network.

The board were invited to comment on the paper, appendices and its content with GS noting JS's submitted comment around the deep dive of committees' risk not yet ready for closure. KB asked for a recap on open and closing position(s) which was addressed by LM with detail around the ICT provision and linking with DDaT work that TH is currently completing with the ODC team.

## 6.2 Data Protection Update

AB updated and presented members on highlighted areas of the strategic plan relevant to DP:

- Legacy Data & Records Management Project progress associated with the move from 10VS is being carefully managed and monitored.
- Response to JS’s query on ICO data protection audit, where NPCC plans to be proactive in asking for the audit to take place, are being delayed. Maturity is not yet there and we have not yet initiated.
- Data ownership has had limited progress. Implementation is proving challenging as this is being examined nationally and it is prudent to await these outcomes.
- Section 22a) work is maturing with national input.
- Work to counter cyber and information security threat alerts continues with communications being robustly rolled out to staff.
- NPCC Joint Data Controllership Agreement (JCA) has just completed its annual review.
- Data Governance Framework for National Datasets and important piece of work on the national data base.
- Delivery Landscape Review Programme’s Data Working Group is to move some data over to PDS from HO.
- Data Protection & Digital Information (No. 2) Bill – positive for policing but is at report stage only.
- National Policing Data Board awarded at DataIQ Awards and support for a public sector winner was notable and appreciated.
- Data Protection support to NPCC continues especially around compliance.

## 7. UPDATES

### 7.1 Section 22a) return results

GS referred to the AAB feedback summary as circulated, and thanked members for their input. Work continues with the APCC. This review is also linked to funding discussions and AAB will be kept informed on drafting updates as they progress. BS suggested a consolidated summary from the start of the process would assist with avoiding repeat commentary; be a useful tool for newer members to have context; and, for AAB to add more content if they so wished. DB’s comment with regard to reserves had been included and JS’s comment was noted and is included in the summary with KB requesting clarification on this being a true reflection of the opinions submitted.

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| Action Arising: | NPCC will consolidate all feedback provided by AAB members on S22a from previous consultation into one document. |
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### 7.2 Chair Recruitment Update

AC thanked AAB members JC, ST and also the independent panel member for their support throughout the recruitment process. The second round of recruitment had a better application response rate. Interviews took place on 13/11/23 and it was a unanimous decision on the appointment of a new chair. Pre-employment checks, including vetting are now underway and when completed the new chair will be announced and induction commenced.

- JC echoed AC’s gratitude over the two round process and praised how the NPCC had responded to challenges faced and made it a positive experience for the panel.

- GSt took the opportunity to thank BS for her leadership and chairing of the AAB with special thanks for her extending her tenure whilst the second round of recruitment completed. Appreciation for her service was very much extended from all Board members, NPCC and associated partners.
- BS thanked all, noting that it had been a rewarding and sometimes challenging experience throughout her tenure and how she was proud of the work of the AAB in steering the journey that NPCC had gone through as an organisation .

### **7.3 Letters of Assurance**

GS reminded members that this financial assurance letter was the remaining paper circulated to complete September's AAB submission.

### **7.4 Chief Constables' Council (CCC) update**

- GSt informed members on the work with ministers, HM's Opposition and APCC. The Shadow Policing Minister has agreed to four thematic conversations: performance, financial resilience, Work Force and science and innovation.
- Meetings with the new Home Secretary are planned, with financial resilience, Government priorities, operational pressures, recognition for NPoCC and other policing agencies work as topics to be addressed.
- NPCC and APCC participation continues with the Covid Inquiry and the offer of a written follow up has been proposed to the Committee.
- Joint Summit feedback had been positive – with plans to run the summit Spring 2025 as meeting arrangements need to be mindful of upcoming elections. There will be a separate closed event for APCC and Chiefs planned for the Autumn.
- Edinburgh Chiefs' Council in December will see presentation of changes on how Council operates, governance, decision making, voting and how papers are tabled – all focussed on wanting to strengthen national collaboration.
- With reference to two critical vacancies - Local Policing and a National Lead for Emergency Services Network – assistance would be welcomed in retaining appointees to these national roles.

### **7.5 Recording AAB Meetings**

AC updated and thanked members for their response to the circulated recording principles. Six members were content with comment from JS on clarifying access to recording permissions. This has been satisfactorily addressed and the principles amended. AC asked if the board were happy for NPCC to proceed and members agreed to AAB meetings being recorded going forwards.