

Security Classification	
NPCC Policy: Documents <u>cannot</u> be accepted or ratified without a security classification (Protective Marking may assist in assessing whether exemptions to FOIA <u>may</u> apply):	
OFFICIAL	
Freedom of information (FOI)	
This document (including attachments and appendices) may be subject to an FOI request and the NPCC FOI Officer & Decision Maker will consult with you on receipt of a request prior to any disclosure. For external Public Authorities in receipt of an FOI, please consult with npcc.foi.request@npfd.police.uk	
Author and Contributors:	Business Support
Force/Organisation:	NPCC HO
Date Created:	01/04/2025
Coordination Committee:	NPCC Central Office
Portfolio:	Audit and Assurance
Attachments @ para	N/A
Information Governance & Security	
In compliance with the Government's Security Policy Framework's (SPF) mandatory requirements, please ensure any onsite printing is supervised, and storage and security of papers are in compliance with the SPF. Dissemination or further distribution of this paper is strictly on a need to know basis and in compliance with other security controls and legislative obligations. If you require any advice, please contact npcc.foi.request@npfd.police.uk	
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/security-policy-framework/hmg-security-policy-framework#risk-management	

MINUTES
AUDIT AND ASSURANCE BOARD (AAB)
1 April 2025 (Online)

ATTENDEES

Robert Light (RL)	AAB Chair
Gavin Stephens (GS)	NPCC Chair
John Campion (JC)	PCC West Mercia
Phillip Golding (PG)	APCC
Gemma Stannard (GeS)	NPCC Head of Strategic Hub

APOLOGIES:

Katy Bourne (KB)	PCC Sussex
Jo Coles (JoC)	Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime, North Yorkshire

1.) WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting after apologising for moving the meeting from last week.

Apologies – see above

Conflict of Interests

No conflict-of-interest reports were declared or received.

2.) PREVIOUS AAB MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The AAB minutes from November 2024 were agreed with no matters arising.

3.) ACTION LOG:

RL reported that there were a number of items to be closed down on the action log with the exception of Action 15.

GeS proposed Action 15, scoping options for a publication strategy for NPCC, to remain open whilst priority focus is on developing options for a NPCC annual governance statement (AGS). Focusing on an AGS will help identify publication strategy requirements. The Board agreed for action 15 to remain open and for the focus at this time to be on progressing an AGS.

Board members agreed that all actions recommended for closure should be closed.

4.) STRATEGIC

4.1 Chief Constables' Council (CCC) Report

GS presented slides as part of this agenda item and the additional points are below:

- GS summarised the key topics from December and March CCCs.
- GS summarised the updates from Op Olympos (post office inquiry). The inquiry report is yet to be delivered and the key issue, on top of the coordination and operational activity, is the funding for Op Olympos. There have been cross departmental discussions with the Policing Minister, Home Office and Department for Business about centrally funding the investigation.
- GS outlined that the additional £1.9 million in funding the NPCC Hub had bid for 25/26 to support those evidenced missed opportunities had not been successful, although active discussions are ongoing with the Home Office. The enormity of the funding pressures on the Home Office were highlighted. GeS and member highlighted that the Home Office are willing to have a mid-year review to see whether there are options around underspend across other areas and whether any funding can be reallocated, but there is no guaranteed. GeS outlined how the NPCC will continue to gather evidence about demands coming into the Hub, missed opportunities, what can be delivered and what cannot. GeS also reiterated that funding for the Reform team is separate to the Hub funding.
- GS discussed police reform and the governance structure, examining the risks and the design, but highlighted that reform will take a number of years. GS presented draft, initial high-level thoughts on what reform might mean for NPCC and how a new National Centre of Policing would likely contain many, if not all, of functions currently delivered by NPCC. This new national body would likely have a key responsibility to formally consult, including with chiefs, and therefore work around whether a form of CCC is required, alongside the committee and portfolio structure, would need consideration.
- The group acknowledged that while the end point of reform is a number of years away, there continues to be a need for NPCC to deliver BAU alongside reform, and also while new build and growth takes place (i.e. NHP Guarantee) and demands continue around transitions. This therefore presents risks in terms of managing demand and capacity. JC expressed the need for a medium and long-term plans and the need to

secure long-term investment for stability. Board members discussed the need to continue to discuss police reform and continue to look at the risks and future possibilities of reform to NPCC.

DECISION - The Board agreed it would be beneficial to discuss BAU at a future meeting, examining how long term, medium term and short term BAU is maintained given finance and resourcing challenges, alongside reform.

- GS highlighted that there have been some information security incidents where papers have been leaked to the media from CCC. Going forward, any leaks will be recorded and managed as information security incidents.
- Police Race Action Plan (PRAP) is in its final year of the national programme and then this responsibility will be handed over to forces and committees for further implementation.

The Board noted and accepted the report for 4.1.

4.2 National Operating Budget 25/26

Finance team presented the slides on the National Operating Budget for 25/26, showing the summary against funding provided for 24/25 and where savings were made. Finance team highlighted that:

- A number of funded areas are expected to finish at end of 25/26 and therefore National Operating Budget contributions for 26/27 expected the decrease, although it is recognised that additional/new cost pressures may arise.
- The Finance Committee will be reviewing all the reports from all national functions to double check there are no more than 5% reserves and that funding is being used in accordance with national operating budget 'grant' arrangements, including any underspends being returned to the central national operating budget 'pot', thereby potentially enabling reductions to the contributions that are made by Police Crime Commissioners (PCCs) into the national operating budget.
- PG highlighted that comms to PCCs on this would be beneficial.

The Board noted and accepted the report for 4.2.

4.3 Hub Funding

The slides were presented on funding for 24/25 and future funding for 25/26.

The Board noted and accepted the report for 4.3.

4.4 Delivery Plan Progress Update

Risk Team presented slides on the progress of Delivery Plans and gave a summary on the year end for the Hub. Key points included:

- A strategic insight dashboard to streamline reporting requirements for the business areas has been developed and will be launched in April. This uses M365 and SharePoint to build a lot of data in the background with a Power BI dashboard to allow senior leaders and managers to easily find data. This tool will be showcased at a future AAB meeting.
- Risk Team presented the high-level strategic delivery objectives for the Hub for 25/26. These have been agreed through senior leadership team.

- RL had concerns around the number of items on the list which are delayed and wanted clarity on why and whether it is due to capacity or work no longer being a priority. RL emphasised the need to not add everything to the list but shortening it to reflect better what can be achieved. GeS highlighted that delivery plans run for a year which produces an end date however many pieces of work that deliver a strategic objective are ongoing and therefore this can impact on the end status. GeS also highlighted the importance of gathering evidence around demands coming in and missed opportunities in order to inform ongoing conversations around resourcing and finances. Risk team discussed having different categorisation to accurately reflect this.
- Board member discussed the opportunity for the Hub to articulate and better showcase the benefits and achievements that are delivered especially in bids for more funding. Risk team agreed that the NPCC is starting to do this more and all the sub-objectives for the Hub have been aligned to the 12 benefits statements to track the progress and help prioritisation and more effective reporting.
- RL emphasised that NPCC is taking the risks for a lot of these, so there should be more recognition and credit. GeS mentioned that the benefit of the Hub is the evidence base NPCC is trying to gather to show why investment is necessary as NPCC provides enabling services for multiple areas of policing.

The Board noted and accepted the report.

4.5 NPCC Strategic Plan 2025 onwards

Strategy Planning and Performance (SPP) team presented the slides for this item and summarised the key points:

- The 2021-2025 plan was an iterative document which was updated to include information on the office of the Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the intervening periods, and all changes were signed off through Regional Chiefs' Council process.
- Following consultation, the NPCC Chair has agreed that the plan would be refreshed rather than fully rewritten (2025-2028).
- The proposed strategic objectives are more streamlined. They link to 2030 Policing Vision.
- The revised NPCC Strategic Plan will be progressed through regional CCC in May for final sign off at July's CCC. The final version will also come to July AAB. It will then be published on the NPCC website.
- The Board agreed it would be helpful to have an update at a future meeting regarding the different aspects of reform taking place (i.e. police reform, CJ) and how this inter-relate.

The Board noted the report and supported the direction of travel and work outlined.

ACTION - GS to provide an update on criminal justice and other reform activity and the interconnectivity to police reform at July AAB.

4.6 NPCC Annual Impact Report planning

presented the plan and proposal for the annual NPCC Impact Report for 24/25, which is part of the business planning documentation under the S22A in conjunction with the NPCC Strategic Plan. It was highlighted that:

- The SPP team aim to have the report available in the summer and they have a full project plan in place to guide its development.
- The Forward will pay cognisance to the wider reform work and the new NPCC Strategic Plan of 2025-28.
- RL positively commented on the design and improvement of the report. RL suggested outcome boxes which promote what has been achieved and delivered and showcase this as clearly as possible in the document.
- Board member agreed with the Chair and suggested showcasing the benefits with numbers/percentages such as impact of the work on VAWG.
- GeS outlined that the 24/25 report will seek to incorporate some of those areas that would be expected in an Annual Governance Statement (AGS), recognising that the full gap analysis (as proposed in the paper to the Board) for an AGS needs to be completed and therefore the 25/26 Impact Report would look to further enhance this as that is produced next year.
- Board member asked for a brief annex to this report with the published accounts to contribute to the refresh of the report and build the sit for governance principles and financial results.
- RL suggested linking value for public money and finances into the report to demonstrate what has been delivered and publishing the report at an opportune time for maximum impact.

The Board noted the report and accepted the layout of the impact report.

5.) DELIVERY

5.1 NPCC Quarterly Finance Statement & Reserves

Finance team updated the Board on the Q3 NPCC finance statement, and the following points were raised:

- Concerns around financial control were raised in relation to issues regarding correct cost codes not always being used. The Board sought reassurance that the necessary oversight was in place to ensure past issues are not repeated. GeS and Finance advised of the current processes in place to assure the board and GeS confirmed that further reiteration would be done to staff at the forthcoming away day. Risk team also highlighted that incorrect use of codes can also be linked to how accounts are processed by host force.
- A discussion on overspends allowed the board to hear the work being done with budget holders to mitigate risk and highlight areas of concern through assurance meetings.
- It was noted that Digital Crime and Performance Pack (DCPP) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) will not feature in 25/26 reporting due to grants ceasing/changing, but new areas will start to be reported on including Reform team.

The report was noted and accepted by the Board.

5.2 ICT Contract Update

Organisational Change Lead gave a n update to the Board on the PDS ICT contract with the follow points:

- The contract with PDS is now signed. Current work is underway to work through the correct charges from PDS during time period working without contract.
- Work has been undertaken with PDS to confirm the capped limit on overseas travel requests which was the areas NPCC had raised as a concern. This has now been resolved with an improved and pragmatic approach to risk assessments being undertaken.

The Board noted and accepted the report.

5.3 SyAP Progress Update

Data Protection Officer (DPO) updated the Board:

- PDS have completed the update of their elements of the Security Assurance for Policing (SyAP) report, this has improved the overall score.
- DPO informed the annual SIRO report recognised progress stalled whilst waiting on the recruitment of an NPCC Information Security Manager (ISM), however, no substantial new risks were caused during the recruitment process.
- The NPCC ISM starts on May 1st. The NPCC position is expected to gradually improve with dedicated resource arriving and therefore capacity to focus on reducing and mitigating risks, including through training and awareness.

The Board noted and accepted this item.

5.4 Review of Host Force SLA

GeS provided update on the Service Level Agreement (SLA) focusing on the work to combine the NPCC and NPoCC's SLA. GeS highlighted:

- NPCC are in liaison with MPS regarding the proposed increased SLA charges. MPS have agreed to review, recognising the NPCC have invested in dedicated resources in several areas and are therefore not drawing on MPS support as outlined in the SLA. NPCC are awaiting updated from MPS.
- MPS are involved in NPCC's Transitions and Build steering group to ensure adequate join up in this area.

This report was noted by the Board

ACTION: GeS to provide an update to the Board on SLA charges following negotiation and liaison with MPS.

5.5 Health and Safety Management Update

The slides were presented in addition to the below points:

- The updated Health and Safety Statement of Intent and Lone Working Policy will be published on NPCC Intranet (HubNet).
- The Board asked how often Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments are undertaken by staff. Lead reassured the Board that DSE is part of NPCC's onboarding process for new starters and also sits within the Performance Development Review (PDR) process.

- A new NPCC Wellbeing Teams channel has been set up with comms being circulated on this and communications being sent to staff to promote Stress awareness month and services available.

The Board noted this item.

6.) AUDIT AND RISK

6.1 DARA Internal Audit Update

Updates on DARAs internal audit work:

- Regarding the recently completed National Operating Budget Governance review DARA have completed, the team recognised the capacity constraints within the Hub and Coordination Committee Chairs and therefore a proportionate approach being needed to governance of national operating budget funded functions.
- The Board questioned whether the findings are isolated to the two areas noted or if there is a risk of differing approaches to oversight across all national operating budget funded areas. LB advised there is risk of inconsistency, but it was also recognised that some national operating budget funded areas are one members and other large teams. GeS highlighted that some functions have significant governance structures already in place (i.e. NPoCC, ACRO, FCIN) and the focus of this review was on those areas where governance was less clear and not as strong as it could be.

ACTION: Finance team to ensure NPCC Finance Committee grant agreements for National Operating Budget funded areas are clear on governance expectations for all areas.

- DARA team highlighted that engagement has started for the Internal Audit Planning 25/26

The report was noted and accepted by the Board.

6.2 DARA Recommendations Tracking Update

Organisation lead provided updates and sought support from the Board to close the outstanding recommendation. Now that the PDS ICT contract is in place, this has ensured the necessary mechanisms are in place to meet the requirements of this recommendation. Delivery against the contract is overseen through Service Management meetings and DDaT Delivery Group.

The Board confirmed that they were happy to close this recommendation.

6.3 NPCC Quarterly Risk Update

Risk team presented an update:

- Team asked the board if they are happy to include both risks and issues in reporting going forward or limit reporting risks only.

DECISION: The Board agreed that both risks and issues should be included in future reporting to AAB.

- Risk team highlighted the purpose of the Strategic Risk approach is not to manage risk at a strategic level but to provide a platform of information back to help inform

discussions and decisions at Committees, Chief Constables' Council and other forums.

- The Board queried how risk interdependencies are drawn together to ensure not looking at risks in isolation. Risk team advised how the use of delivery plans highlights where there is a lack of progress which then prompts the risks and issues capture; this is used in strategic risk to form the prioritisation and delivery planning cycle.
- The NPCC Chair is in discussions with the Home Office to find opportunity to look at the top ten current strategic risk scenarios in shared governance.

This agenda item was noted by the Board.

6.4 NPCC Section 22a Agreement

Organisation lead presented an update on the Section 22a Agreement:

- Work has been paused on refreshing the Section 22a Agreement in light initially of PCC and general election, and more recently following the announcement around police reform.
- Lead sought the support of the Board to tolerate and accept risk of continuing to pause S22a refresh activity, recognising that should reform stop, then the S22a work would need to recommence.
- PG and RL agreed that should reform work stop or falter, then the S22a work should recommence. The NPCC Chair assured discussions will be brought to the board if there is indication of Reform coming off track, options for how to sustain NPCC are to be included.

DECISION: The Board agreed that the S22a review and refresh activity should continue to be paused.

- Board member suggested that the S22a should be reviewed to determine whether it outlines anything around organisation wind down that may need reviewing in light of reform.

ACTION: Organisation and change lead to review S22a wording relating to a wind down scenario.

7.1 AAB ANNUAL REPORT:

RL explained that the AAB annual report is at the stage of being drafted and he will look to circulate before the Extraordinary AAB meeting in May.

7.2 EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

RL confirmed there will be an extraordinary AAB meeting online on 14th May where the aim will be to look at the end of year finance reports, MTFP and the finance papers (reserves policy, strategy, financial instructions, etc).

7.3 AAB WORKSHOP - 17th JULY

RL discussed that July's AAB will be a combined workshop in the morning followed by the AAB meeting in the afternoon. This will take place on July 17th hosted by Jo Coles office in North Yorkshire.

8.) AOB

RL thanked Business Support team for running the slides for the meeting.

RL thanked all the attendees both in the room and online for their continued support and contribution before closing the meeting.