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MINUTES
AUDIT AND ASSURANCE BOARD (AAB)
17TH JULY 2025

ATTENDEES

Robert Light (RL)	AAB Chair
Gavin Stephens (GS)	NPCC Chair
Jo Coles (JoC)	Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime, North Yorkshire
John Campion	PCC West Mercia
Philip Golding	APCC
Angela Wilson	Home Office
Harjinder Kaur	Independent Non-Executive Director
David Bowles	Independent Non-Executive Director
Gareth Wilson	Chief Police Officers Staff Association

APOLOGIES

Katy Bourne	PCC Sussex
Gemma Stannard	NPCC Strategic Hub Lead

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

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 May 2025 were agreed with no matters arising.

ACTION: Update attendance to show Jo Coles was present at last meeting and then publish.

3. ACTION LOG

The Chair reported that there were a number of items as 'Recommended for closure' on the action log and the Board agreed to close those actions.

4. STRATEGIC

4.1 CCC Report

The NPCC Chair provided an overview of the last Chiefs' Council meeting in line with the slides and also covered the following subject:

Casey Report – Recommendations and key components are:

- Provision of a National inquiry.
- An investigation with national oversight through NCA.
- Investigations to be done at a local level, with result of scoping exercise to be reported to back to NPCC Chair.
- Recommendation 12 is critical which outlines that the government should commit to fully resourcing the implementation of the recommendations in the report over multiple years and to track their implementation across departments and other organisations, with regular reports to Parliament.

Spending Review

- NPCC Chair provided Policing Minister with No Cost options.
- Main need now is flexibility over officer head count

DECISION: Board accepted the report.

4.2 NPCC Annual Impact Report 24-25

An update was provided regarding the NPCC Annual Impact Report. The following points were made:

- The production of the report is currently behind where planned to be due to some absences, sickness, delays and other pressing work.
- A Revised timeline was presented to AAB and oversight is being provided by Head of Hub.

The members queried whether the impact on production due to sickness and absence has been caused by impact of change/reform or push pull factors on staff from home forces or something else? The Board stated it would be useful to understand what is impacting on staff and what sickness data looks like.

NPCC responded that as a small team, sickness/absence of small number can have bigger impact on team and delivery. Given make up of secondees and fixed term contract staff, sickness data for those on secondment is held locally by forces. Not believed to be related to concerns of staff around impact of reform. No particular patterns identified around sickness. The volume of work coming into the Hub is driving some additional pressure and stress amongst staff and therefore close monitoring of workloads and prioritising of activities, as well as emphasising wellbeing and stress support is essential going forwards. NPCC's workforce data is derived via two different sources (home forces and through MPS) but not available in one place. Sickness is managed locally but with bi-weekly HR SLT meetings to discuss welfare, wellbeing, sickness, performance reward and recognition, recruitment etc. Also reminded Board that staff surveys have been completed and previously reported to AAB which have shown very high levels of morale, feeling of support from line managers, etc.

Board agreed would be useful to have information to a future meeting around sickness and absence.

DECISION: Board accepted the report and noted the update.

ACTION: NPCC to provide an overview report to a future board meeting that sets out data around staff morale, absence rates/patterns, retention and sickness.

4.3 NPCC Strategic Plan 2025-2028

An overview was provided concerning Strategic Plan 2025-2028 with the following points raised:

- Mindful of Reform Program in the plan development.
- Had been through Regional Chiefs with overall support given and some small amends made based on feedback from this.
- Working on a 'Plan on a Page' as a reference document for the wider NPCC community.
- Currently working on a publication date.

Members were concerned with the previous plan ending on 31 March 2025 – why there is no current plan covering the interim period before the new plan has been published. The NPCC Chair re-assured members that the NPCC currently operates under the 2030 Vision which provides overall direction, and an update was provided to members in terms of time scales and impacts.

AAB Chair also asked when the new plan for 25-28 will be revised with Reform potentially coming into play. Members were reassured that the annual review mechanisms are already embedded into the CCC process.

DECISION: Board accepted the report and noted the update.

ACTION – Requirement for the Strategic Plan to be completed by August 2025.

DECISION: For future reports, there should not be a gap in between publishing of the report.

4.4 Hub Grant Agreement Survey and KPI Results

An overview of the outcome of the survey to chiefs and partners and performance against the KPI's for the Hub as part of the 24/25 was provided:

KPI 1 Delivery of a future funding solution for NPCC Strategic Hub.

- This has been approved by HO, 2025-2026 funding secured.

KPI 2 Effectiveness of the Hub (KPI = 75% or more of Chiefs agreeing)

- KPI achieved with 76% of Chiefs agreeing and recognising Hub 'doing a great job with the resources available'.
- Areas for improvement included doing more marketing of the Hub.

KPI 3 Coordination Committees roles (KPI = 75% or more of Chiefs agreeing improvement in operating practices for Committees)

- KPI not achieved – 71% of chiefs agreed – 12% lower compared with previous year.
- Impact of reduction in Hub funding and loss of resource and therefore ability to effectively support Committees.
- Many responses highlighted that the Strategic Hub does the best it can given the resources and capacity it has. With sufficient funding there is more that could be done in this space and further improvements made.

KPI 4 Improve partnership working (KPI = 75% or more of stakeholders agreeing improvement in partnership working)

- KPI achieved with 100% of respondents agreeing
- Comments highlighted good collaboration and positive working arrangements.

Themes from survey focused on –

- Original KPIs back from 2021 still being used and whether still fit for purpose. Need to consider change to KPIs to reflect that hope now embedded and BAU. Need for new KPIs has been agreed with HO for 25/26.
- New internal Comms officer starts in September which will help with marketing.

DECISION: Board accepted the update. The Board noted the progress in liaising with the HO re new KPIs for the 2025-26 Grant Award arrangement and highlighted the inappropriateness of a 75% satisfaction rate for any organisation.

ACTION: The Board asked for the outcomes to be linked in the Impact Report.

5. DELIVERY

5.1 NPCC Quarter 1 Financial Statement & Reserves Position

NPCC Finance team provided an update on the Q1 finance position. The overview included an update on the Hydrant team who transitioned to NPCC and are HO grant funded but with several vacancies in the team. Roads Policing will also transition to NPCC in Q2.

The AAB chair asked why the underspend on Hydrant budget was quite considerable and what happens to it? NPCC updated was due to vacancies while recruitment take place. Underspend will be reported back to HO and potentially used by HO to provide uplift in funding to another area.

The Board commented on the MPS SLA charges and the significant increase of 40-60%. NPCC confirmed they are in discussions with the Metropolitan Police about the nature of the charges and these increases to obtain clear breakdown. The NPCC Chair gave assurance that the Head of the Strategic Hub is challenging the uplift in costs.

DECISION: The Board's expectation (note of concern) is that SLAs are negotiated at the start of the financial year rather than halfway through. Although the Board recognise that the NPCC are continuing to undertake negotiations with the Met on SLA fees, its stance is that any in year further variances for the Met Police requesting payment should not be paid.

The Board questioned the pay assumption and asked who carries the risk if the pay award is more than 2.8%. The NPCC chair advised that NPCC assume the risk but reiterate 2.8% is line with force plans.

DECISION: Board accepted the Q1 statement position.

5.2 Delivery Plan Progress Update

An overview was provided on the Committee and Hub Delivery Plans and canvassed feedback on views of the layout of the information captured. The format incorporates the delivery planning and NPCC risk management into a new strategic dashboard and is based on Microsoft Power BI through Microsoft Office 365. The Chair praised the layout as refreshing, clear and liked it. The dashboard is used for the Committees, key business areas such as Hub, Police Race Action Plan, and Neighbourhood Guarantee Programme.

DECISION: Board accepted the report and provided feedback on future reporting to help inform discussions and ensure AAB terms of reference (ToR) are met.

5.3 Annual Media and Communications Report

The NPCC Comms team presented the paper and summarised that:

- NPCC comms team have dealt with approx 60 media bids a month or interview requests in the last 12 months, and issued over 130 media statements for NPCC leads in relation to police changes, publications and key media moments.
- The volume of proactive media briefs with journalists from Crime Reporters Association (CRA) and national broadcasters has increased.
- Team have provided comms support to many operational and critical matters, and the business partner model where each committee has a comms SPOC continues to work well.
- The NPCC comms team have played a key role in driving forwards the recommendations arising from the College of Policing's (CoP) independent review of the Nicola Bulley Investigation, particularly around the relationship between media and policing. Now working on a media charter with the CRA, Society of Editors (SOE) and Media Lawyers Association (MLA).
- NPCC Comms team supporting force comms teams through delivering training on how to conduct media briefings and reviewing training offer available to police communicators. Also established key networks to joins up comms specialisms across forces and OPCCs.
- NPCC Comms team remains small in size and recruiting to fill some vacancies. There will be some restructuring in the Comms team to help build resilience. There has been significant investment in the last 12 months for individual programs and portfolios with the requirement for funded dedicated communications resource(s).
- NPCC Communications have worked to ensure local and national messages are aligned. Communications have focussed on Agenda Reform, and it is a growing area with ongoing recruitment.

Board requested more information about the trust and confidence work and ensuring alignment of one voice. The Comms team outlined how speaking with one voice is important and that NPCC had developed a strategic narrative that had been shared with all chiefs. There is also now a new NPCC lead for Trust and Confidence and there has been a lot of work with the Home Office and CoP to develop a strategy. Workshops have also been planned on developing a theory of change on public trust and confidence which should underpin the NPCC Comms team objectives and outputs moving forwards. The Comms team reiterated the importance of sharing best practices with other Comms teams in the forces and developing regional networks for closer relationships.

DECISION: Board accepted the report.

5.4 Annual Data Protection Report

The Data Protection Officer (DPO) summarised the paper, including highlighting that a legislative bill came into force last month which made various changes to the Data Protection Act. The changes are positive for policing and the NPCC were consulted on aspects of the Bill during government consultations before it was passed in Parliament. The DPO highlighted a number of key positive changes including there is more time to deal with subject access requests now. The DPO will now start updating policies and procedures to align with the revised legislation including any national guidance produced for forces, with the work due to be completed by the end of 2025.

In regard to national police reform, there is an aim to create a central area within any new structure and a centralised controller in charge of all national data sets which will ensure ease of working with partners.

DPO highlighted that NPCC is meeting all statutory deadlines this year in all the areas for data subject rights. All of the DPO's work is now based on MS Lists and in future AAB meetings will demonstrate graphs and tracking information from these data sets. DPO presented a list of initiatives they have been working on including an NPCC Information Leaks policy after a leak to the press from Chiefs Constables' Council. This was consulted on with all chiefs with a set of actions to take forwards.

DECISION: The Board accepted and noted the report.

5.5 Information Security and SyAP Report

Data Protection Officer (DPO) gave an update that there are 31 recommendations from the SyAP currently being worked on by the new Information Security Manager (ISM). Focus for the ISM will be to develop more communications for staff to the latest threats. There will also be a push for more policy and process refresh which will be circulated to all staff. A number of actions are dependent on Police Digital Services (PDS), NPCC's IT provider, so the ISM will be working closely with PDS. ISM will work closely with the Risk team on emerging risks.

A question was raised about embedding awareness among staff and working with the Comms team on this. DPO discussed the longer term plans on responses to incidents and working with the new Internal Comms Manager who will be joining the Communications Team to increase awareness and knowledge of information and security culture across the organisation.

DECISION: The Board accepted and noted the report.

Section 6:1 DARA Internal Audit Update:

DARA presented the internal audit plan and also provided an update on the internal audit standards which DARA are required to work to. There are explicit requirements to discuss aspects of the standards with the Board which is defined as an audit committee.

There are three specific principles:

- That the Board review and are happy with the mandate.
- Ensuring that the Board support their independence.
- Ensuring their effectiveness which will come through the annual report to be reported at the next audit committee but there is their own external quality assessment which is coming up and the full report will come to the Board when complete.

A member of the AAB Board raised the question of whether there was a self-assessment and how would they score against the new criteria? DARA are waiting on the CIPFA guidance for public sector. It was agreed that when they get the final guidance from CIPFA if there are any gaps, they will report these back to the Board.

The Audit Plan:

The draft plan has been discussed with the Hub SLT with focus on covering business as usual activity.

The three areas to prioritise are:

- Risk Management Framework.
- Budgetary control.
- SyAP Implementation plan.

These are all key elements of NPCC activity and are linked to the risk register. The risk management gives an overall view of how different parts of the business are looking at delivery and achievement of their objectives. There will be a follow up on work previously done. Finance will be their top priority for the next quarter.

DECISION: Board approved the IA plan 25/26 and AI charter.

DECISION: Board accepted the update.

6.2 DARA Recommendations:

The Head of the Organisational Development and Change Team provided an update on ongoing activity in response to the DARA advisory review of NPCC Governance which was published in April presented two recommendations.

The first recommendation regarding the disconnect and the variability between the financial oversight and the oversight of delivery boards for areas that are funded through the NPCC operating budget was discussed. It was agreed that there would be a proportionate response, taking into account resourcing. The key areas which have been progressed are the introduction of grant agreements for all the budget holders. The second area being progressed is making sure the delivery plans are being aligned to the relevant committee plans to strengthen governance and oversight. The third area is making sure the committees and delivery plans are aligned to the new approach and participating in the use of dashboards. The committees can have oversight of the spend as well as the finance.

The second recommendation was in relation to the National Police FOI & DP Central Referral Unit (NPFDU) and identified that there is a disconnect between that unit's work and the connection into the NPCC governance. They are reviewing all the objectives, defining clear performance outcomes for NPFDU and implement the risk management framework. Work is progressing on this with reporting into the National Data and Analytics Board.

DECISION: The board accepted the update and recommended close of open recs in the log.

6.3 Risk Update:

Members were updated on the accompanying paper, including:

- There are some risks which the Hub have accepted but continue to monitor – estates capacity; Hub funding; reform demand and impact on capacity.
- National Risk Management Forum attended by all force risk managers continues to meet and engagement remains high.
- A categorised list of causes and impacts has been incorporated into the Strategic Insight Dashboard.
- The new risk management framework has been updated to include 'impact proximity; to identify scenarios where impacts have already been encountered (in part or full) to identify issues and emerging considerations.
- The Strategic Risk Assessment is circulated as a quarterly paper to all chiefs through the regional Chiefs' Council process. 20 risks in total were highlighted. There is a treatment type category applied. The NPCC Chair is working on trying to get this incorporated by Home Office colleagues into the National Policing Board and to feature in national policing discussions. The risks are identified and confirmed by the National Risk Forum.

The AAB Board members discussed the overview and agreed that some of the risks are more easily mitigated against than others depending on area. For example, zero emission vehicles is harder to do in a rural area and rural police forces will find this harder than urban police forces. The ability in terms

of force capacity will also vary. Some forces may require additional national support. There are big variations on risks throughout the country.

A key piece of work underway is the engagement with portfolio leads and promoting the identification of new national leads which will help with risk articulation and scoring.

DECISION: Board accepted the update.

7. AOB

None recorded.