Security Classification NPCC Policy: Documents cannot be accepted or ratified without a security classification (Protective Marking may assist in assessing whether exemptions to FOIA may 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@npfdu.pollice.uk	
Author and Contributors:	Business Support
Force/Organisation:	NPCC HQ
Date Created:	12 May 2026
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@npfdu.pollice.uk https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/security-policy-framework/hmg-security-policy-framework#risk-management	

MINUTES
AUDIT AND ASSURANCE BOARD (AAB)
12 May 2026

ATTENDEES

Robert Light (RL) - AAB Chair
Harjinder Kaur (HK) - Independent Non-Executive Director
David Bowles (DB) - Independent Non-Executive Director
Gavin Stephens (GS) - NPCC Chair
Jo Coles (JC) - Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime, North Yorkshire
Roger Hirst (RH) - PFCC Essex
John Tizard (JT) - PCC, Bedfordshire
Graham Campbell (GC) - Home Office
Gareth Wilson (GW) - Chief Police Officers Staff Association
Louise Bailey - DARA Internal Audit
Angela Connolly (AC) - Head of Business Support
Philip Golding (PG) - APCC
Andy Begent (AB) – Information Data Protection Manager
Hannah Hart (HH) - Head of Strategy, Planning and Performance
Tracy Holyer (TH) - Head of Organisational Development & Change
Lorna Humphrey (LH) - Business Planning and Risk Officer
Inderjit Malhi (IM) - Finance Committee Coordinator & Strategic Finance Lead
Gemma Stannard (GeS) - Head of Strategic Hub
Sanjay Thakkar (ST) - DARA Internal Audit
Padraig Twomey (PT) - Finance Business Partner

APOLOGIES

Cheryl Gilbert – Information Security Manager

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, noting the wider political changes and potential associated implications for policing and national governance. Members were reminded of the need to maintain business continuity despite ongoing instability.

One apology was noted from Cheryl Gilbert (Information Security Manager). No declarations of conflict of interest were received.

2. Previous AAB Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the February 2026 meeting were reviewed and confirmed as a true and accurate record.

Members revisited the discussion regarding publication of AAB papers. It was confirmed that minutes are already published and that, from the start of the current financial year, quarterly finance papers and agendas will also be published. It was agreed that this approach will be kept under review, with a view to increasing transparency where appropriate.

Decision: Previous minutes accepted.

3. Action Log

All outstanding actions were reviewed:

- **AAB-A-0010 (Met SLA negotiations)**: Significant progress has been achieved following detailed engagement with the Metropolitan Police. Members noted that prior increases in SLA charges — particularly a 60% uplift in HR costs — had been implemented with minimal notice. Through detailed analysis and negotiation, unnecessary service components have been removed, resulting in a reduction of approximately £55k and the establishment of a clearer charging protocol for future years.
- **AAB-A-0024 (National operating budget detail)**: Additional detail has now been provided within the appended papers.
- **AAB-A-0025 (Home Office Hub funding confirmation)**: Funding for 2026/27 has now been confirmed.

Members welcomed the substantial effort required to resolve the SLA issue, recognising both the financial saving achieved and the improved governance arrangements now in place.

Members thanked NPCC for the additional details provided around the National Operating Budget. Members reiterated the need, moving forward, to provide a more consolidated picture of NPCC funding across all sources, acknowledging the complexity of the current landscape.

Action: The Board to be provided with a consolidated overview of funding across NPCC activities, setting out sources of income and expenditure, recognising the complexity of the funding landscape and the need for a proportionate and practical approach.

Decision: AAB-A-0010, AAB-A-0024 and AAB-A-0025 were approved for closure.

4. Strategic

4.1 Police Reform and NPCC Future Update

The Board received a comprehensive update on policing reform. Three primary strands of activity were outlined:

- Establishment of governance structures for reform delivery, including a Ministerially chaired Board and the development of a Reform Delivery Authority within the Home Office;
- The independent review of police force structures;
- Preparation of primary legislation, expected in the King's Speech and subject to further parliamentary scrutiny following the summer recess.

Members discussed the implications for NPCC functions and governance. Early internal assessments suggest that the majority of existing NPCC functions could transfer into a future National Police Service (NPS), with limited exceptions. The ongoing role of Chiefs' Council remains under consideration, with further clarity expected following structural review outputs and discussions at July's Council.

The Board explored workforce and leadership impacts, noting varied perspectives across Chief Officers—ranging from optimism about future opportunities to uncertainty regarding transition implications. It was recognised that reform represents one of several concurrent national pressures, with operational demands continuing in parallel.

Financial implications were considered in detail. Members challenged assumptions that police reform would automatically deliver efficiencies, emphasising the need for a clearly defined operating model. It was noted that current committee structures—many supported through goodwill—may require formalisation or consolidation ahead of transition. Simplification of governance processes was identified as a key opportunity.

4.2 CCC Update

The Board noted developments since the last Council meeting, particularly the increased national focus on anti-Semitism and associated security risks. Members were briefed on recent terrorist threats and increase in hate crimes, as well as the recently announced £25m Government funding package. A further funding proposal has been submitted to the Treasury to support broader national capability.

The Board discussed the balance between targeted and national approaches. While recognising the concentration of demand in major urban areas, members highlighted capacity challenges faced by smaller forces and the importance of supporting dispersed communities. The need for a coordinated cross-government response, including local authorities, was emphasised. Members also stressed the importance of maintaining a balanced approach across all communities experiencing harm, ensuring that prioritisation remains evidence-led and proportionate.

4.3 NPCC Hub Funding 26-27

The Board reviewed the confirmed funding position for 2026/27, totalling approximately £7.3m, drawn from:

- National Operating Budget contributions;
- Home Office grant funding;
- Contributions from hosted national functions.

Members noted that although total funding mirrors the previous year, the flat settlement presents a real-term reduction when factoring in pay awards and inflation.

The Home Office grant continues to be delivered through multiple mechanisms, including carry-forward funding and new allocations. While this has provided short-term flexibility, members raised concerns regarding sustainability and the reliance on in-year funding adjustments.

The Board highlighted several key risks:

- Lack of long-term certainty in grant funding;
- Dependence on variable underspends;
- Potential pressure on workforce stability and delivery capacity.

It was confirmed that delays in funding agreements have not significantly impacted staff retention, with many individuals remaining in post through fixed-term arrangements. However, members noted the ongoing risk this presents.

The Board discussed wider system challenges, including the absence of a consolidated national funding picture and the implications for planning and assurance.

Decision: Funding position noted and accepted.

4.4 Benefits Approach – The Hub and Wider NPCC
The Board received a detailed update on the NPCC benefits management approach.

A structured benefits framework and dashboard have been developed, providing improved visibility of outputs and impact across the organisation. Members welcomed the increased maturity of the approach and the shift toward evidence-based reporting.

Examples of identified benefits included:

- Significant increases in recruitment efficiency for national programmes
- Estimated annual savings of approximately £5.8m through shared service delivery
- National coordination improvements, including the establishment of the Risk Management Forum
- Enhanced collaboration and communication across forces.

The Board recognised the strategic value of this work in demonstrating NPCC impact, particularly in the context of funding pressures and reform. However, several challenges were identified:

- Limited capacity, with only one dedicated Benefits Manager
- Difficulty in translating system-wide efficiencies into cashable savings
- Variable awareness of benefits across forces.

Members supported further integration of benefits reporting into existing systems to improve accessibility and consistency.

Decision: Report and approach welcomed and accepted. Benefits work to feed into Impact Report.

4.4 NPCC Annual Impact Report
The Board received an update on the Annual Impact Report.

The report is nearing completion, with a draft already circulated for feedback. It will include:

- End-of-year financial data
- A strengthened governance statement
- Expanded inclusion of benefits evidence.

Finalisation is expected by the end of June, with electronic sign-off in July.

Members welcomed the integration of benefits data and the continued improvement in reporting quality.

Decision: Update noted; approach approved.

Action: Finalise and circulate Annual Impact Report draft in July for board review (publication in August 26).

5. Delivery

5.1 Q4 Finance Update

The Q4 Finance Update was reviewed.

Members discussed year-end adjustments, including carry-forward of funding into 2026/27 and variances linked to programme delivery. Additional scrutiny was given to higher-than-expected central costs, including legal service charges, with corrective action underway.

The Board considered the wider challenges of managing finances across a fragmented national landscape, noting the complexity of multiple funding streams and limited direct control over some areas.

Action: Further detail to be provided to the Board on Beaconport-related expenditure.

Decision: Members noted the paper.

5.2 Medium Term Financial Paper

The Medium Term Financial Plan was presented.

Members discussed the level of uncertainty reflected in the plan, particularly in relation to police reform, funding dependencies, and external risks. Concerns were raised that the plan may be overly optimistic given broader geopolitical and financial pressures.

The Board emphasised the importance of regular updates and scenario planning, including contingencies relating to reduced PCC contributions.

Decision: Members noted the plan.

5.3 Annual Review of Financial Papers

The Board reviewed updated financial policies, including the reserves strategy.

Members noted that reserve levels remain relatively low, though appropriately targeted toward known risks such as contract liabilities and potential redundancies. The need for continued monitoring was emphasised, particularly in the context of organisational transition.

Decision: Members approved the documents.

Action: Publish on NPCC website.

5.4 Annual Media and Communications Report

The annual Communications Report was presented.

The Board noted significant progress over the past year, including:

- A shift toward proactive media engagement

- Development of a national communications strategy
- Strengthened relationships with media organisations
- Introduction of a national media charter
- A restructure of the Comms team to move to a content model, with more consistent communication themes.

Members discussed emerging risks relating to misinformation, social media, and information disorder. Concerns were raised regarding the ability of policing to respond to rapidly evolving digital threats and the role of non-traditional media channels. The Board acknowledged that these risks extend beyond policing and require cross-government collaboration.

Decision: Members accepted the report. Further discussion will be progressed with the APCC on communications challenges and information disorder.

5.5 Annual Delivery Plan and Progress Update
The Board reviewed progress against delivery objectives.

Members noted:

- 37% of objectives completed in the previous year
- Delays primarily linked to capacity pressures, particularly within HR.

A revised planning approach has been introduced for 2026/27, aligning delivery activity more closely to reform priorities and incorporating structured prioritisation.

Decision: Members noted the current position and planning approach. A more detailed review will be undertaken at the September workshop.

5.6 Culture and Standards Survey
The Board received findings from the Culture and Standards survey.

Headline results were highly positive, with over 90% of respondents reporting:

- Strong organisational transparency
- Effective leadership integrity
- Positive inclusion and diversity.

Areas for improvement included cross-team collaboration and understanding of behaviours that may cause discomfort.

Members noted the relatively low response rate (40%) and emphasised the importance of increasing engagement to ensure a representative view. A programme of follow-up engagement and action planning is underway, including improved communication and clearer reporting mechanisms.

Decision: The Board noted the report and the positive findings from the Cultural Audit.

6. Audit and Risk

6.1 DARA Internal Audit Update

DARA provided an update on current and upcoming audit activity. The Board received a briefing on the audit of budgetary control, including sampling of transactions, verification work, and the forthcoming final report. Members were informed of ongoing work relating to risk management, people and development, and programme management.

DARA explained that new global internal audit standards introduced in April 2025 require significantly more structured engagement between auditors, Board members, and senior management. Members recognised that increased prescriptiveness would improve governance maturity. GeS highlighted that in previous years the NPCC has received 50 days per year of DARA input, but for budget reasons and increase in DARA fees, this will be reducing to 45 days next financial year.
Decision: Update accepted.

6.2 DARA Recommendations Tracking Update

DARA presented an update on audit activity.

The final report on budgetary control identified six improvement actions, including strengthening budget accountability and training. Follow-up reviews confirmed that previous recommendations have been effectively implemented.

Members were reassured that no significant issues were identified through transaction testing and that financial controls have improved significantly over recent years.

The Board welcomed this positive assurance but raised concerns regarding ongoing capacity pressures within the finance function.

Proposed audit areas for 2026/27 were discussed, including:

- Recharging arrangements
- AI governance
- Contract management (PDS)

Members noted the need for flexibility in planning due to the pace of organisational change.

Decision: Members noted the report and positive assurance on financial controls/progress since improvement plan.

6.3 NPCC Quarterly Risk Update

The quarterly risk update was reviewed. A full report will be shared at the next Board.

Reform remains the highest-rated strategic risk. Two additional risks relating to national operations have been added. At Hub level, new risks include finance team capacity, while cyber security remains a key ongoing risk.

Members noted improvements in risk management maturity but emphasised the need for continued embedding across the organisation.

Decision: Members noted the risk position and accepted.

6.3 Annual Data Protection and SyAP Report
The Board received the annual data protection update.

Key points included:

- Planned retirement of the Data Protection Officer and associated continuity risks
- Ongoing development of the Joint Controllership Agreement
- Increased demand due to reform activity.

Progress against the Security Assessment for Policing (SyAP) was noted, with increased scores in all five key areas, closing the gap on the national average. Members were also informed of improvements in phishing resilience following targeted training exercises.

Members recognised the importance of maintaining capacity and capability in this area during transition.

Decision: Members noted the report as accepted. Strong progress was noted, especially in regard to security awareness and culture.

7. Any Other Business
Members noted:

- Planning for the September in-person meeting and workshop
- Development of the AAB Annual Report

Action: AAB Annual Report will be published on the website.

Next meeting: 8th September in Essex.