



Cleveland Joint Audit Meeting Record – **OPEN SESSION**

Date: Thursday 25 September 2025

Time: 10:00 – 12:30

Venue: PCC Meeting Room, CPHQ, Cliffland Way, Hemlington, TS8 9GL and MS Teams

Meeting Attendance:

Committee Members	
Stuart Green – Chair (SG)	
Elizabeth Hall – Vice Chair (EH)	
Catherine Dillon-Goodier (CDG)	
David Chefneux (DC)	
Gill Rollings (GR)	
Jon Carling (JC)	

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner	
Lisa Oldroyd (LO)	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer
Michael Porter (MP)	Chief Finance Officer
Heidi Spencer (HS)	Executive Assistant
Rachelle Kipling (RK)	Head of Policy, Partnership and Delivery

Cleveland Police	
Nick Eyley (NE)	Commissioning and Procurement Manager
Gill Currie (GC)	HMIC/Governance Manager
Phil Brooke (PB)	Information Security Manager
Ian Wright (IW)	Assistant Chief Officer

Internal Auditors – RSM:	
Matthew Stacey (MS)	Senior Manager - Public and Social Sector Audit

External Auditors – Forvis Mazars:	
Cath Andrew (CA)	Partner

Apologies:

Victoria Fuller	Chief Constable
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Agenda Item:	Discussion / Action:	Action Owner:
1.	<p>Apologies for absence:</p> <p>Apologies were noted from Chief Constable Fuller.</p> <p>IW noted that going forwards DCC David Felton will be attending future meetings as the Chief Officer operational lead.</p> <p>The Chair and members thanked IW for this clarification and look forward to DCC Felton's attendance.</p>	
2.	<p>Welcome and Introductions:</p> <p>The Chair introduced the meeting and welcomed attendees and members.</p>	
3.	<p>Declarations of interests:</p> <p>No declarations of interest were made.</p>	
4.	<p>Open Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26th June 2025.</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were deemed an accurate and reasonable record.</p>	
5.	<p>Internal Audit Reports and Progress Plan Update:</p> <p>a. Emergency Services Report</p> <p>MS presented the report, which captures key themes emerging across the sector and may be used by the Committee to inform future questioning.</p> <p>GR raised a question around the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and the relationship with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and whether this is something that the Committee would like to look at in the future. The Chair sought management views on these points.</p> <p>IW explained that the financial planning audit and its associated fieldwork will touch on central funding, the spending review and scenario planning we undertake. Noting that it will be a good opportunity with some detailed conversation around that when we get to budget setting in activity in January and February. Hopefully by the March meeting we will have processed, identified the risks and know what the situation will look like going forward.</p>	

	<p>MP confirmed that a copy of the budget setting reports will be brought to the March meeting which will give the Committee an insight into the impact of the CSR, which is likely to be</p> <p>Action: Budget reports to be presented at March 2026 meeting.</p> <p>CDG raised a query in relation to collaboration, noting the report highlights that emergency services are being encouraged to collaborate, and wondered if Cleveland Police has a plan on how they're going to undertake that sort of work.</p> <p>IW explained that the Force already have some collaboration arrangements in place with Cleveland Fire Brigade around fleet maintenance, noting that there had been some challenges around that due to resource challenges in their workshop. IW also referenced the ongoing work with local authorities around the Families First agenda, linked to social care reform, with a seconded senior police officer working in partnership with agencies to co-design the future model. In addition, development work is being undertaken at a regional force level with Durham and Northumbria, to explore areas for future collaboration. Linked to the policing reform agenda the Force are also expecting some top-down direction in relation to future activity.</p> <p>CDG also queried what work is being undertaken in relation to community engagement and initiatives that were being undertaken. LO explained that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) are in the process of refreshing the PCC's community engagement and consultation strategy but noted that the PCC has an extensive community engagement programme already in place - which informs his scrutiny programme. LO noted that the team are finalising a local public confidence survey – and noted the importance of community engagement as part of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.</p> <p>IW added that the Force are also working with the OPCC on the Confidence in Policing Panel, aligned to the Community Scrutiny Framework that was previously consulted on by the Home Office.</p> <p>Members thanked officers for their response and noted the report.</p> <p>b. HMICFRS- Tracking and Monitoring</p>	<p>MP</p>
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	<p>MS presented the report to members noting the positive work and 'Substantial Assurance' opinion.</p> <p>Members noted the report and acknowledged GC's hard work and the excellent improvement that had been made over the years.</p> <p>c. Key Financial Controls - Procurement</p> <p>MS provided an overview of the report and the areas it looked at including; responsibilities and accountabilities, compliance with the Procurement Act 2023, compliance with internal policy – contract extensions, quotes, tendering processes and the use of single tender action or waivers.</p> <p>When scoping it was clear that there was quite a new team in place with lot of ongoing work in terms of improvement and understanding of the new Procurement Act which was implemented in February 2025.</p> <p>The Audit provides a 'Reasonable Assurance' opinion – highlighting 3 medium actions and 1 low. The medium priority management actions are in relation to reporting of supplier performance to the Joint Audit Committee and completeness of the contract register where auditors identified suppliers with an expenditure over £50,000 did not explicitly appear on the contracts register.</p> <p>EH queried whether the team was adequately resourced. IW explained that the team hasn't got any vacancies, and hadn't had any for the last 6-months, and there was some upskilling to be done – noting that more experienced members of team have been focussing time on two large contractual issues. IW welcomed the audit report and confirmed that activity to address the management actions is underway but acknowledged that there are development needs to get the team where they want it to be – with a focus on greater strategic oversight and forward look.</p> <p>JC was concerned around the 34 contractual relationships where there wasn't a contract in place</p> <p>IW shared the concern and noted that the transition period impacted by lack of staff, that some of the documentation activity had drifted. IW noted that they were in a better place now, getting back on top of documentation to achieve a fully resolved position.</p> <p>MP commented on the importance of targeting the internal audit programme in areas where there may be some</p>	
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	<p>organisational uncertainty due to high staff turnover, new processes and procedures etc – to identify the necessary actions and improvements that the organisation need to put in place.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p> <p>d. Data Quality</p> <p>MS highlighted the official sensitive markings on the report and queried if members were happy to discuss this in the open session.</p> <p>Members agreed that the report should be considered under a closed session, with the agenda and minutes to reflect this position.</p> <p>Action: Website, agenda and minutes to be amended to reflect that this item will be considered under a closed session.</p> <p>e. Internal Audit Progress Report</p> <p>MS presented progress against the internal audit plan for 2025/26 which was approved by the Committee at the March 2025 meeting. The report provided an update on progress against the audit plan and summarised the results of audit work to date. Progress is on track and a number of reports will be presented at the December meeting.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	HS
6.	<p>External Audit Update</p> <p>Progress Report September 2025</p> <p>CA provided a brief update on the progress report, noting that we have received both sets of accounts. Reviews of the two narrative reports and annual governance statements have been undertaken – where a few minor points have been returned to officers to address.</p> <p>CA highlighted that they have instructed the pension fund auditor in terms of the work they are required to undertake. In terms of auditing activity, value for money work has commenced and is nearing completion. CA noted that there are concerns around the timetable but she is confident that they (external audit) will still be able to give a clear opinion by the backstop date.</p>	

	<p>CA noted that at this point, the pension fund audit won't complete until February next year, but the majority of the work is planned before Christmas – offering this position as comfort to the Committee.</p> <p>EH asked specifically how confident is CA that they will meet the statutory deadline. CA explained that they are working right up to the deadline, and with the timing of the pension fund audit that was always going to be the case until we get the pension fund audit pulled further forward - which hasn't been an option this year but is confident that that will happen in the future and then other audits would be able to brought forward as well.</p> <p>DF requested that an update on the pension audit position is brought to December's meeting.</p> <p>Action: Pension fund audit position update to be included in the external audit progress report for the December Committee Meeting.</p> <p>MP commented on the current position and challenges this brings to respective finance teams at the end January and February, with the pressures of precept and budget setting – and would prefer the audit work to conclude much earlier – but understands the position.</p> <p>MP noted from an administrative and Committee perspective, an additional Committee meeting will need to scheduled towards the end of February to finalise the statement of accounts.</p> <p>The Chair noted CA's progress update, the current position and agreed that a meeting should be diarised for February.</p> <p>Action: Committee meeting to be scheduled for the end of February to finalise statement of accounts.</p>	<p>CA</p> <p>MP</p>
7.	<p>OPCC Risk Register & Business Continuity Overview</p> <p>MP presented the report to the Committee, highlighting the stable risk position and onward commitment to fully review the risk register as part of the annual governance statement.</p> <p>MP explained that progress had been made against the potential organisational governance risk, as previously reported, following the Chief Constable's retirement announcement. As Committee members were aware, a new Chief Constable had been appointed, and the Force had</p>	

	<p>appointed a Deputy Chief Constable, There are a couple of areas in terms of the Chief Officer Team that are still being worked through but the position is significantly better in terms of the essential risks that were presented six months ago.</p> <p>MP explained that he intends to review the financial risks on the back of the Comprehensive Spending Review and moving forward with the police funding settlement, recognising the risk in this area is increasing with associated financial pressures.</p> <p>JC queried the risks in relation to holding the Chief Constable to account and partnership working. MP explained that a lot work had been undertaken by the OPCC to strengthen the scrutiny programme and the further review of this risk will identify if our actions are now embedded and achieving the target. In relation to partnership working this is a risk area which is also intrinsically linked to the financial position with many organisations relying on the PCC for support with grants, and without early visibility of future government funding intentions we are unable to provide onward assurance to our partners – and unfortunately this is going to continue as a risk.</p> <p>EH queried the registered risk in relation to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), LO explained the national requirement that had been placed on all SARCs in the country to achieve ISO forensic accreditation – and this position was not unique to Cleveland alone. LO assured members that plans are in place to achieve accreditation and work is ongoing.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
8.	<p>Audit Committee Annual Report</p> <p>The Chair expressed his thanks to MP for drafting an exceptional report on behalf of the Committee.</p> <p>MP welcomed the Committee's feedback, including any suggested changes or amendments, and confirmed that the finalised report will be presented to the PCC and Chief Constable at the next Joint Strategic Board meeting.</p> <p>GC highlighted a typographical error at reference 3.3 of the report, which incorrectly cites the AIR Board. GC clarified that this board has now been replaced by the GAIN Board. MP thanked GC for the correction and confirmed the report will be updated accordingly.</p>	

	<p>EH invited comments from the OPCC and the Force regarding the work of the Audit Committee. Both LO and IW commended the Committee for its high-quality supportive challenge, dedication, and commitment in fulfilling its responsibilities and preparing thoroughly for meetings.</p> <p>Action: Amend section 3.3 of the report to reflect the replacement of the AIR Board with the GAIN Board.</p> <p>Decision: The Committee approved the Annual Report.</p>	MP
9.	<p>Annual Cyber Security and Information Risk Guidance for Audit Committees</p> <p>The Chair and members noted the sensitive contents of the report and noted that this item should be considered under a closed session, with the agenda and minutes to reflect this position.</p> <p>Action: Website, agenda and minutes to be amended to reflect that this item will be considered under a closed session.</p>	HS
10.	<p>OPCC Data Protection Report</p> <p>RK presented the annual report to the Committee, outlining Data Controller responsibilities and delegations.</p> <p>RK highlighted that the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SAR) handled during 24/25 financial – 33 FOI and 2 SAR's. During the same time period, there had been four reported data breaches which had been assessed and did not require escalation.</p> <p>JC noted that it would be helpful to compare number/performance against the previous year. As a result of new processes to manage and monitor information requests, RK advised that information can be provided in a future report.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
11.	<p>Contract Standing Orders- Exemptions</p> <p>The Chair and members acknowledged the sensitive content contained within the exemption report. It was agreed that this item should be considered in a closed session, with both the agenda and minutes reflecting this position.</p> <p>Members requested that, for future meetings, consideration</p>	

	<p>be given to reporting exemptions in a manner that distinguishes between items for closed session and those suitable for open session. NE confirmed that this can be considered for future meetings.</p> <p>Action: Website, agenda and minutes to be amended to reflect that this item will be considered under a closed session.</p> <p>Action: Consideration to be given to reporting exemptions in a manner that distinguishes between items for closed session and those suitable for open session</p>	<p>HS</p> <p>NE</p>
12.	<p>Monitoring Officer Annual Report</p> <p>LO presented key points from the report, concluding that during the reporting period there was no indication of unlawful decisions or maladministration by the PCC or the OPCC.</p> <p>LO confirmed that no statutory reports had been made to the Police and Crime Panel during the period under review.</p> <p>The Chair asked whether there were any issues the Committee might encounter in the short to medium term. LO advised that no specific issues were currently anticipated but emphasised the important role of internal audit, noting that a forthcoming audit will focus on fraud and associated arrangements.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
13.	<p>Police Complaints Handling Report</p> <p>MP highlighted to the Committee that this was the first time the report had been presented, following the Committee's previous request for further information in this area of OPCC business, recognising the importance of this subject. MP confirmed that, going forward, this annual report has been scheduled into the Forward Plan.</p> <p>MP provided an overview of the Model 3 complaints handling approach in Cleveland, with Cleveland being only one of two other areas nationally using this model. With the OPCC placing significant emphasis and assurance on this area, as evidenced through internal audit reports.</p> <p>As this was the first report presented to the Committee on complaints handling, members were invited to provide feedback or request additional detail for future iterations.</p>	

	<p>EH queried whether the performance in this area may exceed what is required, and sought assurance that resources and performance are being considered in this context. Both MP and LO confirmed that the position was being monitored.</p> <p>Members commended the adoption of Model 3, the accreditations achieved. It was noted that the strong performance and achievements reflect positively on the PCC and OPCC.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
14.	<p>Any Other Business:</p> <p>The Chair and members noted that this was GR's final Committee meeting and took the opportunity to thank her for the dedication and commitment she has shown over the years.</p> <p>GR expressed her thanks to members and officers and extended her best wishes for the years ahead.</p>	
	<p>Date of next meeting:</p> <p>Thursday 18th December 2025 – 10.00 – 12.30</p> <p>Venue: PCC Meeting Room, CPHQ and MS Teams</p>	