



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

Date: Thursday 18 December 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)	
Jon Carling (JC)	

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner	
Lisa Oldroyd (LO)	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer
Michael Porter (MP)	Chief Finance Officer
Rob Cooney (RC)	Senior Business Support Officer
Rachelle Kipling (RK)	Head of Policy, Partnership and Delivery

Cleveland Police	
David Felton (DF)	Deputy Chief Constable
Ian Wright (IW)	Assistant Chief Officer
Donna Butcher (DB)	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Lead
Neal Gillson (NG)	Ethics Lead
Michelle Phillips (MPH)	Head of Civil Litigation
Louise Solomon (LS)	Head of Corporate Services
Gill Currie (GC)	HMIC/Governance Officer

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

External Auditors – Forvis Mazars:	
Cath Andrew (CA)	Senior Manager
Mark Kirkham (MK)	Partner

Apologies:

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Agenda Item:	Discussion / Action:	Action Owner:
1.	Apologies for absence: None raised.	
2.	Welcome and Introductions: SG opened the meeting and welcomed members.	
3.	Declarations of interests: None raised.	
4.	Open Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th September 2025. The minutes were deemed a reasonable and accurate record and were approved by members.	
5.	Internal Audit Reports and Progress Plan Update: a) Financial Planning: MS reported that the recent review provided substantial assurance with no actions required. The review covered several key areas, including timetabling, training, delegation of responsibilities, sensitivity analysis, and the robustness of the approval process. Both SG and MS noted the positive overall position, credit for which was attributed to management and their respective teams. MP provided an update on the upcoming financial policing funding settlement, noting that it had not yet been received but was expected later that day. The settlement is expected to be for one year only, rather than three. MP noted that while the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) should have allowed for a three year allocation, the reason for a single year settlement remains unclear. MP explained that a one year settlement crates significant challenges for long-term strategic planning. MP confirmed that information on all grants is not expected to be included in this immediate release.	

	<p>The group discussed historical and future precept levels. MP explained that increases are likely to be capped at £15, designed to keep national increases around 5%. JC noted fluctuations in previous years (e.g., £14 and £12). MP clarified that historically, increases have ranged between £10 and £24.</p> <p>Members noted the report and thanked management for their excellent work.</p> <p>b) Firearms Licensing:</p> <p>MS presented the report on policies and procedures regarding licensing, which included NICHE data, national systems, granting, appeals, and revocations. The report returned a reasonable assurance rating, consistent with the 2022-2323 review. While the rating is the same, MS noted that the specific management actions required differ from the previous year.</p> <p>The main concern raised by members was the timeliness of processing applications. DF explained that delays, some exceeding 12 months) are due to a combination of national backlogs and internal resource constraints. This has been identified as a high-risk area. A structural review is currently underway to prioritise resources and address these risks.</p> <p>DC identified typing errors regarding performance indicators. On pages 6 and 11, references to weeks should be amended to months to align with the actual four-month turnaround target.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p> <p>ACTION: MS to amend the report on pages 6 and 11 to correctly reflect months instead of weeks regarding license turnaround times.</p> <p>c) Vulnerability:</p> <p>MS presented an advisory report regarding the Vulnerability Strategy, explaining that a formal assurance opinion could not be provided at this stage as the strategy remains in draft and several programs are still in development. The report provides visibility on current risk levels and the direction of travel, focusing on governance, training needs, and resource demand.</p> <p>MS explained that key areas for improvement include better data capture for children as domestic abuse victims and the</p>	<p>MS</p>
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	<p>integration of information between 'Missing from Home' and 'Harm Outside the Home' teams. MS confirmed that timelines have been set for all high and medium priority actions, noting that this is a fast moving area of work.</p> <p>DF provided further assurance, noting that vulnerability is a high priority area with fourteen distinct strands monitored via a spotlight report at the Force Assurance Board. He confirmed that the Power BI Dashboard is now operational and used daily for Domestic Abuse cases, and that the strategy was agreed upon in the summer with a communications plan now in place.</p> <p>Discussions took place regarding the development of Power BI Dashboards. IW and GC explained that these are designed through a collaborative commissioning process between Corporate Services and Subject Matter Experts. While data quality was historically a barrier, IW confirmed that standards have improved significantly.</p> <p>To conclude, DF offered to facilitate a demonstration of the Power BI dashboards for any members interested in seeing how the force displays and utilises this data. SG and members welcomed this offer.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p> <p>ACTION: DF to facilitate an insight session for Committee members to view the Power BI dashboards in practice</p> <p>d) Equality and Diversity:</p> <p>MS presented a report focussed on the strategy, with a primary emphasis on improving workforce representation and related objectives. The review examined how performance measures align with the Race Action Plan and national structures, while also auditing monitoring, review and challenge processes.</p> <p>MS confirmed that the report returned a substantial assurance rating with no management actions required. However, it was noted that as Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion is an ever evolving field, it must remain a consistent priority for the force to ensure that current momentum is maintained.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p> <p>e) Progress Report December 2025:</p>	<p>DF</p>
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	<p>MS provided a high level summary of all previous audits, noting that a follow up visit is currently undergoing internal quality assurance. Progress is being made across several areas: vetting has been finalised, the data quality audit is complete, and the fraud audit is expected by month-end. Legal and litigation audits are currently at the draft stage, while contract management and follow up visits are scheduled for the new year. MS expressed full confidence that all work will be completed by the June deadline.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the audit plan's delivery, with EH expressing concern over the volume of reports due by March and potential staff availability issues. MS clarified that four reports are already in draft or near completion, and the plan remains on track.</p> <p>To manage resources, the HR Learning and Development and the Police and Crime Plan audits have been removed from the current plan due to oversubscription; however, these will be reviewed for inclusion in next year's plan based on risk. IW noted that Learning and Development remains a priority, particularly with the recruitment of a new department head.</p> <p>A discussion took place regarding the disparity between the 10 day management response target and the actual average of 20.6 days. MS explained that the force's internal assurance board process has added time but improved the quality of responses, which is the primary focus. DC queried whether the target date needs revision, and MS agreed to review this.</p> <p>Finally, the challenges of remote auditing were highlighted, specifically regarding IT-based audits where communication gaps can occur. Both the force and RSM are looking into returning to more on-site auditing to improve efficiency and clarity.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p> <p>ACTION: MS to review and potentially revise the 10-day management response target to align with the new internal assurance board process.</p> <p>f) Annual Report:</p> <p>MS provided a brief update on the Annual Report, noting that it had been touched upon and that the remaining items would be taken together as part of the wider reporting suite.</p>	<p>MS</p>
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Members noted the report

g) Emergency Services Benchmarking:

MS presented the benchmarking report, which captures comparisons between themes and issues across the sector. It was emphasised that this data should be viewed as useful thematic insight based on internal audit plans, rather than a leaderboard or target set. DC noted the report's value in supporting continuous improvement but highlighted a disturbing national statistic within the sector regarding the 100 police officers who took their own lives.

Further discussion took place regarding the 4.2% pay award; MP confirmed this was almost fully funded for the current year, with next year's funding to be incorporated into the overall Comprehensive Spending Review.

Members noted the report.

h) Emergency Services Briefing (November 2025):

The briefing included key questions and considerations from hot topics over the last few months. A significant portion of the discussion focussed on the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. JC queried the level of oversight and assurance regarding its implementation. MP advised that this is a key area for PCC oversight, with monthly briefings and regular reports submitted to the Joint Strategic Board. IW confirmed that robust monitoring processes are in place due to the financial and public confidence risks associated with non-delivery.

Members noted the report.

i) Failure to Prevent Fraud Briefing September 2025:

The Committee noted the fraud report, which highlighted activities from Fraud Awareness Week. The briefing also covered recent work surrounding the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act to ensure organisational compliance and awareness.

Members noted the report.

j) Autumn RSM Emerging Risk Radar September 2025:

	<p>The Risk Radar report provided a cross-sector analysis of risks relevant to the force. DC commended the two year comparison feature, particularly regarding evolving technology challenges. JC noted that while many risks, such as international instability and financial pressures, are outside of the force's direct control, they necessitate strong internal focus, particularly regarding cyber challenges.</p> <p>Members noted the report</p>	
6.	<p>External Audit Update:</p> <p>a) Draft Auditor's Annual Report</p> <p>CA advised that while the report was intended to cover the full audit, the misalignment of statutory backstop dates means it currently serves as a position statement. The report includes value for money commentary and confirms that no risks of significant weakness, nor actual significant weaknesses were identified in the criteria, though it does draw attention to the HMICFRS National Child Protection Inspection (NCPI) report.</p> <p>Work on the financial statements is progressing well with prompt responses from management; a formal comment is expected on this at the JIAC Meeting in February. IW concurred from a finance perspective, noting that while central government delays have placed pressure on the team, they are working toward the February backstop date. CA confirmed there are currently no risks to meeting this deadline but agreed to inform the committee members immediately should any concerns arise.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p> <p>ACTION: CA to provide a formal update/comment on financial statements at the JIAC meeting in February.</p> <p>ACTION: CA to notify Committee members immediately if any risks arise regarding the ability to meet the statutory backstop date.</p>	<p>CA</p> <p>CA</p>
7.	<p>Treasury Management Report:</p> <p>MP presented the half-year review of the Treasury Management Strategy, outlining progress against KPIs and prudential indicators, including those incorporating IFRS 16. It</p>	

	<p>was confirmed that there are currently no issues regarding delivery against these indicators.</p> <p>A key focus of the discussion was the management of the £5.5 million loan factored into current plans; MP advised that we are intentionally delaying this borrowing to secure more favourable interest rates in the future. However, due to the capital programme currently being funded heavily by reserves, which are expected to drop from approximately £20 million to £12-13 million by the end of March, MP is considering further borrowing to protect the remaining reserve balance. This will be formally evaluated during the upcoming budget setting process. DC supported the strategy of deferring borrowing to mitigate interest rate costs, and the committee formally noted the updates and approved the recommendations.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
8.	<p>HMICFRS Reports & Areas for Improvement Trackers:</p> <p>LS reported a significantly improved position since the submission of the initial report, with 10 additional actions closed, leaving 70 live actions and no new actions received. Notable closures include four Level 3 actions, including one related to NCPI and four super complaints, as well as two level two actions regarding thematic inspections on child exploitation and rape.</p> <p>Robust arrangements remain in place to maintain high standards of improvement. Regarding the NCPI inspection from June last year, all causes of concern have been addressed, with only one remaining area for improvement concerning the recording of child ethnicity, which is currently being processed.</p> <p>LS confirmed that preparations have commenced for the next PEEL inspection round, as the force has been selected for batch ten. Additionally, the force has been chosen as one of five for a four-day inspection into Counter-Terrorism Safeguarding (PREVENT), scheduled for completion by the end of January. DF mentioned that a further review regarding Safety Advisory Groups, stemming from national incidents in Southport and the West Midlands, is anticipated, and the force is awaiting a survey to determine its level of involvement.</p> <p>JC noted the increased frequency of PEEL inspections, though it was clarified this would not negatively impact the force. The RSM audit into the monitoring and tracking of</p>	

	<p>HMICFRS activity recently returned a rating of substantial assurance, confirming the effectiveness of internal oversight.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
9.	<p>Cleveland Police- Internal Audit Recommendations Tracker:</p> <p>GC reported that good progress continues to be made, with a significant number of identified actions now closed and no new issues to report. A minor error was noted in the vulnerability audit regarding a deadline that had passed just prior to the report's release. GC clarified that the high risk action concerning Power BI has been successfully completed, and the remaining outstanding action is currently in hand.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
10.	<p>Police and Crime Commissioner- Internal Audit Recommendations Tracker:</p> <p>MP confirmed the report highlights a positive position regarding the completion of outstanding tasks, supported by an appendix demonstrating the steady progress being made. It was confirmed that all actions undergo a formal review process through the Senior Management Team Meeting, to ensure oversight and accountability. The OPCC remains committed to maintaining a focus on these areas to ensure continued improvement and closure of remaining items.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
11.	<p>Civil Claims Update:</p> <p>a) Civil Claims 6-month Update:</p> <p>MPH advised that this report covers the period from 1st April to 30th September. Regarding employment tribunals, three new cases were received during this period, bringing the total being managed to nine; no cases were finalised during this timeframe.</p> <p>In terms of civil claims, 120 were received. The committee noted a strong withdrawal and win rate of 81%. Legal services continue to provide feedback to groups such as Driver Standards and Custody to improve performance, and a new Evolve Legal Services Newsletter has been launched across three local forces to share learning.</p>	

	<p>MP noted that financially, the force faces significant challenges as it is largely self-insured, with vehicle excesses reaching nearly £500,000. Total assessed liabilities for known claims currently stand at £3.8 million, a significant increase from the £2.8 million provided for last year. MP advised that the Joint Strategic Board is reviewing how the force provides for these costs. Consequently, funds will need to be earmarked, and provisions adjusted in the next financial year to cover these liabilities, which will be considered alongside the broader strategy of borrowing and reserve usage.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p> <p>b) Civil Claims Exception Reports:</p> <p>Two exceptions were reported for this period. The first related to a case where the settlement and associated costs slightly exceeded the insurance deductible. The second involved a small motor claim lost in court; the judge ruled in favour of the claimant after determining that the witness evidence provided could not be relied upon. MP noted that reserves for such claims are set based on worst case scenarios and are reviewed regularly to ensure financial accuracy.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
12.	<p>Cleveland Police- Annual Ethics Committee Report:</p> <p>NG advised that the Code of Ethics remains the foundational framework for the force, supported by a network of boards and an Independent Ethics Committee.</p> <p>NG explained that while the role of ethics advocates has been discontinued, internal communication between stakeholder groups remains strong. This is bolstered by a well-received training package delivered by the Learning and Development team, ensuring a high level of understanding regarding complex ethical issues across the organisation.</p> <p>NG stated that in response to a changing national landscape where high profile cases have impacted public trust, the force is prioritising a preventative culture. The PREVENT team is actively sharing lessons learned to mitigate issues before they arise. Discussions are also ongoing regarding the balance between transparency and public confidence, specifically concerning the potential of anonymisation of misconduct cases and the acceptance of external funding for sports teams.</p>	

	<p>NG explained that the force continues to focus on ethical dilemmas, seeking diverse perspectives rather than just definitive answers.</p> <p>NG advised that the region is performing well overall; specifically, the Northeast is noted for its progress. While the current picture is positive, there are ongoing calls for the establishment of a fully independent ethics committee to further enhance oversight.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
13.	<p>Cleveland Police- Equality and Diversity Monitoring Report:</p> <p>DB advised there has been a significant increase in staff disclosing protected characteristics, particularly regarding disabilities. Notably, there was a 49% reduction in the number of individuals choosing not to state a disability, suggesting improved internal confidence in data sharing.</p> <p>DB explained that the current officer profile does not yet reflect the ethnicity of the local community. To address this, a Positive Action Working Group has been established to analyse recruitment data and implement targeted strategies. Current outreach includes school visits, community engagement events, and a successful mentoring scheme for candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds. In the most recent recruitment round, this mentoring saw a high success rate, with 7 out of 9 participants being successful (the remaining 2 failed solely on right to work administrative requirements).</p> <p>Discussions also addressed the nature of positive action. It was clarified and confirmed by DF that these initiatives do not involve lowering entry standards or changing expectations for new recruits; rather, they focus on supporting candidates through the existing process.</p> <p>Members noted the report and positive progress that had been made by the Force in relation to the disclosure of protected characteristics.</p>	
14.	<p>Cleveland Police- Gender Pay Gap Report:</p> <p>DB confirmed the force has seen a reduction in the median pay gap, which is now aligned with the national average. This shift is attributed to a successful increase in overall</p>	

	<p>female representation across the workforce, as well as a specific rise in the number of female police officers.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
15.	<p>Police and Crime Commissioner- Equality and Diversity Monitoring Report:</p> <p>RK advised that the OPCC is transitioning to a more strategic approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) for the 2025-29 period. EDI objectives are now fully embedded within the Police and Crime Plan, ensuring they are integrated into daily office practices rather than treated as standalone issues. This strategic alignment includes enhanced scrutiny of areas such as Violence Against Women and Girls and improved data commissioning with partners to identify and close gaps in service provision.</p> <p>RK stated that recent community engagement following the disorder in Middlesbrough and Hartlepool was successful. The OPCC facilitated a riot compensation scheme, utilising community drop in sessions and providing translation support to ensure accessibility for non-English speakers.</p> <p>RK explained that progress on long term objectives is managed through a dedicated action plan with specific timelines, which is regularly reviewed at Senior Management Team meetings to ensure accountability.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
16.	<p>Any other business:</p> <p>DC inquired about the recent announcement regarding PCCs and whether specific details or implications were currently known. It was confirmed that a session will be held for members immediately following this meeting to share available information, which was limited at this time.</p> <p>Additionally, SG reminded members that a further audit committee has been scheduled for February 23rd from 10:30-12:00</p>	
17.	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting:</p> <p>Monday 23rd February 2026: 10:00-12:30</p> <p>Cleveland PCC Meeting Room, Central Headquarters, Hemlington</p>	

