Police & Crime Panel – November 2026
Progress update from Police & Crime Commissioner

Strategic Performance Objectives – Police & Crime Plan

The Commissioner set four Strategic Performance Objectives for the Constabulary in the Police & Crime Plan. Good progress is being made in these areas:

- **Improve crime recording** – Progress continues to be made following the closure of the Cause of Concern last year. The remaining Area for Improvement in relation to sexual offences is expected to be closed by HMICFRS soon as compliance is now consistently strong and regularly exceeds 97% each month.

- **Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour** – The improvements in crime recording have broadly established a new baseline. There were some notable reductions in crime and ASB in 2025/26, including the 2nd biggest fall in shoplifting in the country and the largest fall in robbery offences nationally. There has been a slight reduction in victim based offences (-1.6%) in the 12 months to July 2026, offset by an increase in state based offences (16.3%) which reflects improved policing proactivity and changes to recording of some drugs distribution offences. Latest national data puts Hertfordshire as having the 15th lowest crime rate out of 43 police force areas. Hertfordshire continues to have low crime rates for sexual offences, rape, violence without injury, public order and business burglary with none of these areas higher than 9th out of 43 forces. Anti-social behaviour fell by 1.5% in the 12 months to July 2026.

- **Solve more crime** – The Constabulary continues to sustain its strong progress in solving more crime and is now consistently a top 10 police force for crime detection rates (in comparison to bottom 5 in 2024). An increasingly positive month on month trend is clear in the data; for example in July 2026, Hertfordshire solved the 2nd highest amount of crime of any police force. Hertfordshire is top 5 in its use of out of court resolutions and is 5th most improved for reducing the use of Outcome 18 (investigation complete with no suspect identified). There remains much more to do here but clear and sustained progress and shared ambition from the Constabulary and PCC to push further in this area.

- **Keep people safe** – Continued strong progress in this area. Hertfordshire is now:

    - 3rd best for use of Clare's Law disclosures (compared to 43rd in 2024), with further work planned to further increase the 'Right to Ask' disclosures.
    - 5th best for the use of Domestic Violence Protection Orders as a % of DA crimes (compared to bottom 5 in 2024).

- **Responding to the public** – improvement in the control room continues to be sustained. Hertfordshire continues to meet and exceed the national target for 999 call handling with an average answer time of 4-5 seconds. 101 call abandonment is more than half what it was in 2024 with average answer time typically around a minute quicker

than in 2024. Incident attendance targets of 85% of immediate response arriving in 15 minutes and 80% of prompt response arriving in 60 minutes being consistently met.

Crime Survey of England & Wales 2025/26

The Crime Survey is the largest independent assessment of victimisation and public confidence in policing, carried out by the Office for National Statistics.

Hertfordshire performed particularly strongly this year:

- 1st for the public saying the police do a good or excellent job in their local area – 59% compared to a national average of 49%
- 1st for whether the police deal effectively with local concerns – 62% compared to a national average of 48%

Largest reduction in robbery offences in England & Wales

In 2025/26, Hertfordshire had the biggest reduction in robbery offences (both personal and business) in the country, down by 13% and bucking the national trend of a 10% increase. Only six police forces recorded any reduction.

Watford had the biggest reduction of any local authority area in the country (-39%) following some excellent work with hotspot patrols and proactive policing in the town centre and Cassiobury Park in particular following some challenges in 2024. Dacorum, St Albans and North Hertfordshire were also in the top 10 local authorities with the largest reductions.

Burglary crackdown delivers improved solved rate

Hertfordshire has traditionally had a very low burglary detection rate. Sustained focus and scrutiny on this has begun to deliver results. In the first quarter of the financial year, Hertfordshire solved more burglaries than any other police force and is the most improved force. Unsurprisingly, new burglary reports also fell by 16% in the same period.

PEEL Inspection

HMICFRS have begun their PEEL inspection which will conclude in February. A document return of over 300 documents has been completed and submitted by the Constabulary and the workforce survey has just completed with a significantly improved response rate than 2024.

During the course of this year, the number of open HMICFRS recommendations has been reduced from 196 to fewer than 50. Evidence based closure reports are prepared for remaining recommendations to demonstrate further closure is possible.

The inspection report is expected to be published in spring 2027.

New performance monitoring system

HMICFRS has introduced a new performance monitoring system to assess police performance between PEEL inspections. Hertfordshire has been placed in the highest category, Level 1, which indicates the force is performing well and making sustained improvements.

Accountability & Performance Meetings

Since the last meeting of the Panel, the Commissioner has used the APMs to hold the Chief Constable to account on the following topics:

- **June:** Stalking; Online CSA; Released under investigation; Burglary outcomes; Citizens in Policing.
- **July:** Stop and search; Children's Commissioner report on strip searches; Use of force; Custody.
- **August:** Crime Survey of England & Wales; Sentencing Act and management of early release; Security for the Jewish community; Rural crime; Vehicle theft.
- **October:** Violence Against Women and Girls; Firearms licensing; NPT priority setting; Fraud; DBS checks; Hate crime.

APMs are webcast live and recordings able to view back for public transparency.

Constabulary internal changes

The Constabulary is currently undertaking a restructure of the Public Protection Command, following the successful restructuring of Local Policing Command last year. The objective of the review of Public Protection is to improve resilience and capacity in a number of teams, especially those investigating sexual offences and offences against children. Additional investment in detective numbers has been made in these teams.

Police Headquarters

The new police headquarters became operational in September with building work being completed under budget and ahead of schedule.

The building provides significantly improved working conditions for police officers and staff in investigative, operational and support teams.

As the Panel will be aware from previous budgets, the redevelopment does significantly increase the Constabulary's debt levels, the impact of which will need to be managed carefully with increasing interest rates.

Operation Hotspot

Despite the Home Office's late cancellation of Operation Hotspot funding for 2025/26, the Constabulary is working to maintain a focus on hotspot policing and town centres within existing resources.

A range of funding is also being used for overtime patrols, including grant funding from the Commissioner and knife crime funding in Watford, Hemel Hempstead and Waltham Cross.

Transfer of complaints function

As signposted in the June report, the transfer of the complaints function back to the Constabulary has taken effect, from 1st October.

The Commissioner decided to return the function to the Constabulary due to the uncertainty of the model of policing governance from 2028 and the need for stability for this important function.

Hertfordshire has always been an outlier in complaints handling being in the PCC's office.

There is no change to the legislative framework under which complaints are dealt with and the PCC's office still retains the role of undertaking a complaint review if a complainant is unhappy with the original complaint handling.

In 2025/26, complaints volumes declined by 5.8% compared to the previous year.

Respect Orders

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 has introduced Respect Orders from 26th October. These are a civil order applied for by police to introduce controls on an individual committing sustained anti-social behaviour, with criminal sanctions for breaches. Respect Orders can contain positive and negative requirements, such as attending drug treatment or banning someone from a town centre, depending on the circumstances.

Hertfordshire welcomed the Policing Minister to Hemel Hempstead as part of the national launch of these Orders. The Minister recognised that Hertfordshire is well prepared to use these powers, with around 30 individuals identified who may be suitable and the first Orders applied for, including a first Court hearing on 19th November.

The follow through by the Courts and the criminal justice system especially in the case of any breaches will be critical to the success or otherwise of Respect Orders.

Early release

The next phases of early release of offenders under the Sentencing Act has commenced, with estimates of around a dozen offenders being released early into Hertfordshire in each tranche. It is too early to assess the impact of this locally but nationally the National Police Chiefs Council forecasts a 6% increase in crime as a result of the impact of the Sentencing Act.

The Commissioner has provided grant funding to the Constabulary to enhance offender management checks for those being released early.

Procurement of new Records Management System

The Eastern Region forces have completed the procurement of a new records management system for crime investigation, case files and custody to replace Athena from 2029. The preferred supplier is relatively new to the UK market but has significant international expertise. The operational advice from Chief Constables is there are significant benefits of transferring to a new system, although there are financial implications for having dual running while the new

system is developed, tested and implemented alongside the current system. These will be reflected in the budget papers the Panel sees in February.

Live Facial Recognition

The Panel has previously been briefed on the Constabulary's pilots of Live Facial Recognition. These have been judged successful, with the technology performing better in real life than laboratory testing. There have been no false activations.

As a result, the Commissioner has funded two dedicated LFR vans for Hertfordshire so the Constabulary has dedicated capability and is not reliant on mutual aid. These arrived in October.

The next LFR deployments will be in Hemel Hempstead town centre on 16th November and Waltham Cross town centre on 18th November.

Security of Jewish communities

Following the incidents in North London and Manchester earlier in the year, the Home Office announced a funding package for policing to improve the security of Jewish communities. Hertfordshire has secured around £9 million over three years to support the deployment of 30 police officers into areas of the county with the highest Jewish populations.

These officers will have a proactive and preventative role, manage hate crime investigations and undertake wider community cohesion work.

Community Cashback

The Commissioner launched Community Cashback, a grant scheme to return to communities money from the sale of property seized from criminals or that was unclaimed. The grant scheme was open during October with 25 applications from charities and community groups being approved.

A wide variety of projects have been funded, including relating to healthy relationships, crisis grants to domestic abuse victims, youth mentoring and diversion, street pastors, park improvements, hate crime awareness, scam prevention, therapeutic support for victims of crime and support for family conflict.

Violence Against Women and Girls

The Chrysalis Centre, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire's domestic abuse perpetrator programme has successfully been awarded further Home Office funding for the next financial year. The programme continues to have positive results in reducing reoffending and bringing about behaviour change in perpetrators.

Unfortunately the Home Office has discontinued funding for the child against adult violence strand of Chrysalis, despite it being oversubscribed. As a result, referral pathways are now closed.

Firearms licensing

The Commissioner has continued to focus on holding the Constabulary to account and seeking improvements in firearms licensing performance. It has now been a topic on the agendas of 9 APMs since his election.

Substantial progress has been made towards closing the Cause of Concern with a noticeably improved service now in place, modernised case management systems and greater ability for applicants to contact the service for updates.

Current forecasts are that the backlog of renewals will be cleared by Christmas allowing the backlog of new applications to be focused on.

Previously, BCH had the highest number of temporary permits in the country. It is expected this will be close to zero by Christmas.

Public complaints to the Commissioner have fallen very substantially, reflecting the improved service and backlog reduction.

Road safety

The Commissioner has been engaged in the refresh of the partnership Road Safety Strategy, but remains keen to see this translate into meaningful partnership action to reduce the number of KSIs on Hertfordshire's roads.

The Commissioner has funded an update and recalibration of speed guns available to Neighbourhood Policing Teams and the Roads Policing Units to ensure usable equipment is available for local speed checks.

Unauthorised developments

The Commissioner has called for changes in the law to give greater police powers to support local authority enforcement of unauthorised developments, following incidents this year in Flamstead and Sawbridgeworth.

The Commissioner has called for:

- A new 72-hour Emergency Stop Power for police, allowing officers to halt substantial development, backed by power of arrest, where there are reasonable grounds to believe planning permission is required but has not been granted. This would give councils time to investigate and take formal planning enforcement action.
- New police powers to enforce Temporary Stop Notices, including powers to stop works, arrest those breaching a Stop Notice and, where appropriate, immobilise or seize vehicles and machinery being used to continue the development.
- A new criminal offence of Aggravated Intentional Unauthorised Development, targeting those who knowingly carry out major works with the intention of circumventing planning enforcement, including on Bank Holiday weekends.

The Commissioner hopes to meet Ministers shortly regarding his policy proposals.

Police reform

The Government continues to make slow progress with its plans for police reform and legislation is not now expected before early 2027, with not significant time available for the Parliamentary passage before many of the changes coming into effect in 2028. There are considerable risks acknowledged by the Home Office with the Government's timeline and limited preparation.

Although policing governance will eventually transfer to a Mayor of Hertfordshire, the precise timescale for this remains unclear and is unlikely to be clearer until Local Government Reorganisation is resolved.

The Commissioner continues to oppose the Government's plans for regional police force mergers, in line with the consultation he ran in the summer which showed that 68% of Hertfordshire residents were opposed to mergers.

This year, the Government has taken £100 million out of local policing budgets to fund work on police reform and it is expected this will grow in future years. The Chief Constable of Greater Manchester has estimated that police force mergers may cost up to £2 billion (around 10% of the annual policing budget) to implement, which will have a major impact on the funds available for daily policing.