

JOINT AUDIT AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

LANCASHIRE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER AND CHIEF CONSTABLE

ANNUAL REPORT for the year April 2020 to March 2021

1. Introduction and Background

The Joint Audit Committee for the Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Chief Constable (CC) was established on 1 April 2014. The remit of the Committee was extended in September 2015 to include the consideration of ethical issues and revised Terms of Reference for the Committee were agreed by the Joint Management Board in January 2016. The Committee has considered both audit and ethical issues from that date.

2. Assurance

The Committee supports the effective discharge of PCC and CC business through the provision of advice and guidance in accordance with good governance principles; a focus on audit and ethical assurance; effective internal and financial controls and effective risk management processes.

3. Membership

The membership of the Committee throughout the year has been:

Karol Sanderson (Chair)
Stephen Dobson
David Jones
Russell Weaver
Paul Richardson

I would like to thank all the Committee members for their enthusiasm and commitment during the year.

4. The work of the Committee

The Committee formally met 4 times during the year: July 2020, October 2020, December 2020 and March 2021. Due to the impact of COVID-19 all meetings were held remotely by video link. Despite the challenges of working remotely, the Committee felt able to carry out its work to an acceptable standard.

Meetings were divided into separate "Audit" and "Ethics" agenda.

a) Audit Agenda

The following standing items were considered at each meeting:

- Update/Monitoring Reports from both Internal and External audit
- Reports from Committee members

Additional agenda items were also considered as follows :

July 2020

- Annual Report from the Committee and from Internal Audit
- Draft Statements of Account & Annual Governance statements
- Update on Business Continuity including the impact of COVID-19

October 2020

- A presentation from the Chief Constable, Andy Rhodes
- A presentation from Lancashire Pensions Partnership

December 2020

- The Audit Findings report and the External Audit Joint Annual Letter

March 2021

- Presentation on Dealing with Fraud investigations
- External Audit letter
- Internal audit plan for the coming year
- Review of Committee work programme

At each meeting additional matters including Review of Inspection Reports and Risk Registers were also dealt with but due to sensitivity issues were not discussed in public.

b) Ethics Agenda

The following Standing items were considered at each meeting:

- Update from key issues relating to the Constabulary and the PCC from Ian Cosh & Steve Freeman
- Update from Professional Standards Department
- Update from Force Tactical Ethics Committee
- Reports from Committee members

Additional agenda items were also considered as follows:

July 2020

- Annual Report from the Committee
- PSD complaints performance report

September 2020

- Reports on Business Interests and Gifts and Hospitality
- OPCC report including dealing with the review of Constabulary complaints.

December 2020

- Force Tactical Ethics Committee Work plan
- OPCC update on review of Constabulary complaints.

March 2021

- Update on Constabulary partnership working in management of community mental health issues
- Force Tactical Ethics Committee Work plan
- OPCC Ethics Update Report
- Review of Committee work programme
- OPCC Ethics Update report

Note : At each meeting additional matters including review of COVID-19 penalty notices were also dealt with but due to sensitivity issues were not discussed in public.

COVID-19 had impacted upon work in this area. In previous years, the Committee has had the benefit of a report at each meeting on Dip Sampling of Police Complaints files carried out by Committee members. The Committee had been in the process of extending dip sampling by Committee members to include grievance and misconduct files. However due to the impact of COVID-19 it was not possible for this sampling to take place. The Committee felt that it was able to gain assurance on complaint and misconduct from the report provided by PSD but had been unsighted on grievance issues.

c) Work of the Committee outside the formal meetings:

During the year, all Committee members received training on:

- the impact of the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020 on the work of PSD
- details of the work of the OPCC in dealing with the review of Constabulary Complaints under the new regulations.

Other work carried out by Committee members was limited due to the impact of COVID-19 but included observing meetings of the Force Tactical Ethics Committee

d) Summary Conclusions

The Committee is satisfied that the PCC and CC can take substantial assurance in respect of maintaining effective internal control, reporting on financial and other performance and in respect of risk management arrangements.

The Committee is also able to provide assurance on the way in which the Force is applying the principles of the Code of Ethics in its systems and processes and on its response to the challenges of embedding the Code of Ethics within the workforce.

This year, COVID-19 has impacted upon the wider engagement of Committee Members with the Constabulary and the OPCC but the Committee has been able to satisfy itself that there is a positive commitment by both the Chief Constable and the PCC to the principles of ethical behaviour.

Karol Sanderson
Chair of Joint Audit and Ethics Committee
June 2021