

OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

JOINT AUDIT COMMITTEE

9th September 2021

Present: Mrs D Turner (Chair)
Mr J Sheppard, Mr A Blackmore, Mr R Leadbeter and Dr J Wademan

Together with: Mr J Cuthbert – Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Mr D Garwood-Pask – Chief Finance Officer (CFO)
Mrs S Curley – Chief Executive (CEX)
Mrs N Warren – Governance Officer (GO)
Mr N Stephens – Assistant Chief Officer, Resources (ACOR)
Mr N McLain – Head of Continuous Improvement (HoCI)
Mr M Coe – Head of Finance (HoF)
Mrs T Veale – Audit Wales (AW)
Mr M Corcoran, Torfaen County Borough Council – Internal Audit (TCBC)
Mr S Gourlay – (TIAA)

The meeting was held via Teams and commenced at 10:45am following the deep dive presentation chaired by Vice Chair, Dr J Wademan.

APOLOGIES

Action

1. Apologies for absence were received from Ms P Kelly, Chief Constable, Ms A Blakeman, Deputy Chief Constable, Ms H Williams, Audit Wales, Mrs J Regan, Head of Assurance and Compliance, Ms C James, Audit Wales and Mrs H Cargill, (TIAA).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. The Commissioner declared that he was a Board Director of the Police Digital Services Company and also the Blue Light Commercial Company.

MINUTES

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2021 were received and confirmed.

ACTIONS

4. We received and noted the actions from the meeting held on the 28th July 2021 and actions outstanding from earlier meetings.

Action 3, 28th July 2021, Annual Audit of Financial Statements ISA260

We asked if employees were aware of the importance of timeliness regarding expenses submission at year-end and the HoF assured us that instructions were circulated in Force to advise on prompt submission of expenses and also invoices. However, additional reminders would be sent to Chief and Senior Officers going forward, to ensure their expenses were submitted by April for the previous financial year.

Action 6, 28th July 2021, To Identify any Risks Arising from This Meeting

We noted the response to the overall Comprehensive Review Settlement (CSR) and asked what impact the proposed pay settlement would have on workforce morale given the impact of Covid19. The ACOR advised us that the Force were acutely aware of the potential impact the settlement could have on employees, particularly with the additional rise in National Insurance contributions. The Professional Standards Department monitored employees through vetting for any financial irregularities, to ensure support provisions could be put into place if required. There is also a significant ongoing wellbeing package within the Force offering support to employees. There have been no issues of concern raised by the employees with regards to the support provided.

We asked if there would be additional UK Government funding to cover any additional responsibilities, or if the Force would have to provide funding for the UK Government's 'Beating Crime Plan'. The HOCl informed us the Force had been provided with a clear Performance Framework from the UK Government in relation to expected outcomes, as a result of the 20 thousand additional officers for Operation Uplift and the Force were in a good position to deliver on the plan. There is a new regional structure in place to ensure Forces work together to ensure consistency of reporting, to share good practice and to escalate regional issues to the new National Policing Board.

Action 8, July 28th 2021, Joint Audit Committee Training Day. We noted the Formal JAC Training Day would take place in March 2022 and the informal JAC Training Day was to be arranged for September 2021.

Action 2, 1st March 2021, Joint Risk Register

We noted the outcome column on the risk register summary page had been added but it had not been populated. The HOCl advised us following Risk Management Training and discussions with the JAC, the Force were reviewing their approach to Risk Management and a paper was in the process of being developed. We agreed to close the action as the new register was expected to be presented at the December 2021 JAC meeting.

Action 4, 1st March 2021, External Audit

We agreed the action could be closed, as the Shared Resource Services (SRS) review also formed part of Audit Wales update paper.

Action 4, 10th December 2020, External Audit

An update was requested on the status of the Fully Integrated Resource Management System (FIRMS) Service Level Agreement and the ACOR confirmed it was expected to be issued by the end of September 2021.

Action

Action 8, 10th December 2020, JAC Self Assessment Action Plan

JAC members queried why the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) Whistleblowing policy required external review. The CEx explained that due to high demand in the Joint Legal Services Team (JLS), there was initially a delay in reviewing the policy and they had considered using an external agency to review it. However, they had subsequently reviewed the policy themselves and provided the OPCC with their recommendations. The OPCC had started to work through the recommendations and the policy would be presented to the JAC at the following meeting.

Action 2, 7th October 2020, Statement of Accounts 2019/20

An update was requested on the simplification of the Statement of Accounts following the Welsh Police Finance and Resources Group (WPFGRG) meeting in August. The CFO informed us he would provide Mr Leadbeter with an update following the meeting at the WPFGRG next week. We agreed the action could be closed once Mr Leadbeter had been updated with the outcome.

5. The information contained in the report(s) below has been subjected to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 2018 and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent's public interest test and was deemed to be exempt from publication under section 7.

TO DISCUSS NEW RISKS AND CHANGES TO RISK RATINGS ON THE JOINT RISK REGISTER

6. We received and noted the Joint Risk Register.

We were advised that a new risk had been added to the risk register, relating to the supply chain issues of laptops and desktops (medium risk); which was causing problems for new starters within the Force. The risk rating had also increased from medium to high for Crime Data Integrity (CDI) (National Crime Recording Standards non-compliance), as the consequences of the risk were deemed to be higher than initially assessed. There were no other changes to the risk ratings.

The JAC Risk Lead asked if the Force were in a position to take onboard the new recruits in relation to Operation Uplift. The ACOR assured us the Force were well prepared in that the planned recruitment process for Police Community Support Officers (PSCO), Staff and Police Officers had continued online throughout Covid19. This had ensured the number of required officers and staff had been recruited for Operation Uplift and any other vacancies that had arisen during the course of the year.

A number of training courses have also been conducted online and training facilities were split in two to ensure the safety of staff when face to face training was required.

Action

We were advised that there had been delivery issues from China in relation to officers' kits, but they had now been received. The main challenge for the Force related to the lack of electronic microchips as this was affecting the laptop rollout programme and the upgrade to the windows 10 application.

Although the Force had a stock of laptops available for the September intake of officers, there was a problem with supply for the January 2022 intake, as the order placed in April 2021 had been delayed. Orders have therefore been accelerated over the course of the next 24 months, to allow as much time as possible for orders to be delivered. However, in order to ensure laptop provision for the January 2022 intake, the Force were considering purchasing a minimal number of cheaper laptops with a lower specification, until the higher specification models became available. The lower specification laptops would then be kept in reserve.

We discussed the low rated Brexit risk. The ACOR agreed to review the risk to consider if any new risks should be recorded separately in light of current supply chain issues; the potential increase in price rises due to labour shortages; and potential public order issues resulting from supply shortages.

ACOR

The JAC ICT Lead welcomed the increased focus on Crime Data Integrity (CDI) and asked what steps the Force were taking to ensure timely and accurate information was being obtained at all times. The HOCI assured us that the Force had developed a comprehensive CDI Plan, including training of staff and an internal communication campaign. Incidents were being reviewed to ensure every opportunity for crimes were being captured at First Point of Contact (FPOC) and the Force also have a structure in place to ensure there is focus on culture change in this area.

The JAC ICT Lead queried what the barriers were in the reporting of incidents. The HOCI informed us that the Home Office counting rules were very complex and expectations on officers was very high, therefore training was a priority for the Force. The key focus was to identify all crimes relating to an incident; whether it was through the initial investigation, through partner agencies, via a comment on social media or something that had come to light during the closure of the investigation.

We asked for an update on the Reportable Incidents risk. The ACOR assured us that work was ongoing in order to ensure that automated updates were sent to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) when probationers had breached their parole conditions, or if they have been involved in an incident. However, there was an interim process to provide details to the HMPPS until this had been completed.

We agreed a footnote should be added to each tab on the Risk Spreadsheet, noting the Risk reference number for ease of use.

**Action
ACOR/
HOCI**

JAC members asked how embedded Risk Management processes were within the Force and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), aside from the oversight provided by the JAC. We were assured that risk was embedded both in the OPCC and the Force, as it was a high priority item on many of the individual governance boards within the Force and OPCC, including the Scrutiny Executive Board (SEB) at which the OPCC's views were considered on the Joint Strategic Risk Register. The Joint Risk Register was also a standing item on the Commissioner's Strategy Performance Board for scrutiny.

Mrs D Turner joined the meeting at 11:30am.

DISASTER RECOVERY UPDATE

7. We received the Disaster Recovery Update.

The ACOR informed us that the Disaster Recovery project was almost complete and it was expected that the switching of systems would take place on the 14th September 2021 to enable connectivity, in order for data transfers to take place. The delay in completion of the switch was due to having to coordinate availability of resources from British Telecom (BT) and the SRS; and ascertaining a suitable timeframe to take down various systems within the Force Control Room.

The JAC ICT Lead queried when the testing of the system would take place and the ACOR confirmed testing would start at the end of September and should take approximately 2 to 4 weeks.

The JAC ICT Lead informed us that her meetings with SRS and Bridewell provided reassurance that progress was being made and welcomed the expected completion date for the Disaster Recovery project.

INTERNAL AUDIT – (TIAA)

8. We received and noted the Internal Audit Report.

TIAA had conducted a survey on how organisations wished to conduct their business following the easing of Covid19 restrictions and 85% preferred to use a mixture of virtual and face to face methods. TIAA advised us that the majority of audits were conducted remotely, however, if onsite visits were required, the relevant health and safety risk assessments were conducted prior to the visit taking place.

There were no reports issued since the previous report, however there were draft reports awaiting Management comment.

There were no changes to the Audit Plan 2021/22. However, details of the proposed coverage for the current year and 2022/23 – 2023/24 have been mapped to the Joint Strategic Risk Register as requested by the JAC. This will identify any audits that need to be brought forward, or where there were any gaps in future planned coverage.

Action

TIAA advised us that following their discussion with JAC Members, they would look to incorporate thematic recommendations within the root cause indicators. It was suggested that trends over a long period of time may be beneficial.

The JAC Risk Lead asked if a review of the firearms licencing arrangements should form part of the Internal Audit Plan, in light of recent events in Plymouth. The ACOR confirmed that following the incident, all Forces were directed by the Home Office (HO) to review their firearms licencing arrangements and to provide details on the number of firearms licences within their Force areas. This would demonstrate that their firearms licencing processes were effective and that the revocation of licences was swift and based on a risk assessed approach. The Force responded to the request in the required timeframe and subsequently dedicated an Inspector to review the whole process, in order to provide assurance regarding service provision in this area.

The Inspector's findings were positive in that the processes and arrangements were sufficient. However, the firearms licensing policy requires some improvements and these were to be addressed in the form of an action plan.

The Force conducts vetting and health checks and a number of other checks as a matter of course on firearms license applicants. However, social media checks on individual licence holders were not mandatory, although it was expected that this would be a directive from the HO in the near future.

The PCC assured us that he was satisfied that the processes and arrangements were sufficient following a review of firearms licencing.

It was suggested that Firearms Licencing, Welsh Language Standards, ISO Accreditation for Collision Investigation and Brexit supplies should be included within the 3-year Audit Plan, in place of Budgetary Control, General Ledger and Contract Management, as these areas had received a significant amount of focus and appeared to be satisfactory. The ACOR and CFO agreed to consider the request.

**ACOR/
CFO**

We acknowledged that the four collaborative audits had received a substantial assurance rating and agreed that it was a significant achievement.

A further discussion was held in relation to supply chain risks and in order to provide assurance to JAC, the ACOR agreed to present the Annual

Procurement Report at the December 2021 JAC meeting, including an addendum on Force supply chain issues.

**Action
ACOR**

The JAC ICT Lead referred to the National Cyber Security Centre (NSCS) Device Security Guidance briefing and requested further information with regards to how the Force were managing issues raised within the report. The ACOR assured us that the Force had adopted and complied with national cyber security guidance in order to be able to use Windows 10 and to participate in the National Enabling Programme (NEP) including Microsoft 365 (M365). The ACOR agreed to provide a response to the JAC ICT Lead.

ACOR

We took a short comfort break.

INTERNAL AUDIT – TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL (TCBC)

9. We received and noted the ICT digital annual report 2020/2021.

The ACOR advised us that the report was presented to the Force and OPCC as part of Annual Governance and delivers an overview of the vast ICT digital programme. The report included the services delivered by the SRS, Digital Service Division (DSD) collaborative services with South Wales Police (SWP) and Police Digital Services.

We were informed that there was now a Digital Devices Team (DDT) in Force, to manage the issue and recovery of digital assets such as laptops and mobile phones.

The SRS Strategy and Digital Strategy were well established and the strategic deliverables against those strategies were demonstrated within the report. These included significant projects such as the new Headquarters, Disaster Recovery and the new Electronic Time Management system.

Despite the challenges presented by Covid19 during 2020/21, the SRS were able to maintain the ICT support service desk provision remotely, ensuring business continuity for the Force.

In terms of progression, the Single-Online Home provision was being further developed and new applications were also being developed for M365. The new filing structure was almost complete and Telematics was being rolled out to monitor effectiveness and efficiency of vehicle usage.

We were advised that the £1.2m underspend in 2020/21 financial year was mainly due to a timing issue relating to licencing matters which had been budgeted for in the 2020/21 year, but expenditure fell into 2021/22 financial year.

We were informed that there are good governance arrangements in place to ensure appropriate decision making and to determine strategic

direction on service delivery. This included the quarterly SRS Strategic Board at which the Commissioner and Chief Constable were participants.

We acknowledged the significant amount of work undertaken but noted that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) had not been included. The ACOR assured us that GDPR had been incorporated within the forthcoming Information Governance item but agreed to include it within any subsequent reports.

We noted the IT Assets Disposal follow-up audit had received a moderate assurance rating and asked if a further follow-up audit would be taking place, to ensure a positive response could be provided to all recommendations within the TCBC audit. The ACOR assured us the DDT were managing ICT Assets device delivery and recovery effectively. However, the follow-up report was to be presented to the Section 151 Officers at the Finance Governance Board (FGB) the following week, where consideration would be given to issues receiving moderate assurance. This would subsequently ensure that the disposal of ICT Assets was being done safely and securely.

The ICT JAC Lead advised us that the audit methodology used enabled a 100% full assurance rating, which was not realistic and also noted there was a large jump between the rating bands. These issues were raised with the ACOR during their recent ICT meeting for consideration.

We referred to the National ICT Service and DSD and noted the variances against the budget and asked if there were any trends in relation to expenditure in terms of national service providers. The ACOR confirmed there was no trend, as the National ICT Services expenditure referred to spend for national force systems and on occasion the figures differed slightly to what was anticipated and didn't always fall into the expected financial year. The ACOR confirmed that the Force had 5 SRS ICT staff members within the DSD team and there was a recharge between the SRS collaboration underspend with the overspend on the DSD that correlates, as they are charged into one account.

The CFO confirmed the Force had a fixed budget for payment of the National ICT Service provision to the Home Office (HO) for systems such as the Police National Database. However, there has been a stepped change in the expected expenditure over the last few years. Chief Finance Officers attended the Charges Oversight Board at which they held the HO and the Police Digital Services to account for the bills presented to Commissioners for these services.

The stepped change has arisen due to individual Chief Officers from many of the 43 Forces requesting changes to systems in isolation, as opposed to improvements being made across the board. In recent years this has resulted in a £30m rise in costs for Commissioners. This was reduced by half to £15m following a review by the Charges Oversight Board. The CFO assured us that the required process improvements had been made

nationally and any new projects or ongoing services were prioritised accordingly, taking into consideration value for money.

Action

We referred to the SRS Annual Report and noted that there was reference regarding how SRS could capture and continue the level of innovation and pace of change sustained during Covid19 going forward. We asked if the team were motivated to do this given what they had to deal with in relation to Covid19 and could this level of pace be accomplished.

The ACOR informed us that it was very much dependent upon the individuals and the effect Covid19 had had upon them. Some members of staff have adapted well to the changes and the Force have a good focus on wellbeing, to ensure support was offered to others who need it. The DSD and SRS ICT Teams are small and most of the staff were working from home. We were assured that the Forces are continually monitoring staff welfare and resilience within those teams, however, the ACOR agreed to raise the issue at the FGB meeting the following week.

ACOR

The JAC ICT Lead asked who was responsible for the wellbeing of SRS and DSD Teams and whether there was a collective approach through the partners organisations. The ACOR confirmed that Torfaen County Borough Council provided Human Resources and wellbeing support for the SRS Team and Gwent and SWP supported the DSD in the same respect.

We thanked the SRS and DSD for their hard work.

The CFO advised us that the reports were also well received by the Commissioner at the Strategy Performance Board.

EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

10. We received and noted the Audit Update Report.

Although there was a significant improvement in the quality of the draft accounts and the working papers this year, Audit Wales (AW) have agreed to arrange a post project learning (PPL) session for the 4th October 2021. The PPL will be held between the Finance Team and the Audit Wales Team to reflect on the 2020/21 audit and to put in place agreed actions to further improve next year's closedown. In addition, SWP were also arranging an All-Wales PPL in December 2021 or January 2022.

Due to staff taking annual leave, there had been a delay in the SRS Review of Collaboration. However, all three workshops have now taken place and the common themes from each of the workshops have been analysed. A summary document is in the process of being prepared for sharing with all the workshop attendees, prior to being presented to JAC for review.

The review of Collaboration of Emergency Services in Wales was almost complete, as all field work and interviews had taken place. AW were awaiting confirmation that the data and information used was correct, prior to issuing the draft report for publication in December 2021 or January 2022. The AW team were also working on a Data Tool to accompany the report and a further meeting was to take place with the Joint Emergency Services Group on how best to deliver the tool that supports the work that they undertake.

We thanked AW for the report.

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND BUDGET SETTING TIMETABLE

11. We received and noted the Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Setting Timetable.

The CFO advised us that the Finance Department had developed a detailed budget setting timetable to provide assurance that there was a robust approach to budget setting. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was the first iteration of the year in preparation for the 2022/23 Budget Setting process.

The MTFP has been updated to reflect assumptions, known pressures and funding changes since 31/3/2021 and rolled forward to cover the 5-year period 2022/23 to 2026/27. In relation to the recently announced 1.25% rise in employers' National Insurance (NI) contributions to fund Adult Social Care, it was expected that this would be fully funded by Government and was therefore not reflected in the MTFP as a cost.

The new deficit for 2026/27 is £4.9m, when taking into consideration the £6m impact on the funding formula and forecast efficiency savings.

There is still uncertainty around the level of Council Tax collection rates, given the impact Covid19 has had on households. The CFO informed us that he intended to continue to raise his concerns with the five local authorities and the Welsh Government in September 2021 at the WPFRC. He would ascertain if they have been able to maintain their Council Tax base rates, or whether there would be a permanent drop in the tax base which could impact on the overall precept rise.

It had been confirmed that there would be a three-year Comprehensive Spending Review and it was to be announced on the 27th October 2021, at the same time of the Autumn budget.

A joint comprehensive CSR bid was being submitted to the HO by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), to which 38 of the 43 Forces contributed, including Gwent.

The CFO confirmed he had sought assurances that the bid captured all of the major financial requests, such as the funding for the sustainability of Operation Uplift; major technology programme transition costs such as for the Emergency Services Network; prevention and early intervention initiatives across the public sector; pay awards; and for the sustainability of the existing budget.

Although the HO were not publishing its individual bid, a useful summary would be provided to PCCs as in the previous year. It was expected that the CSR would provide flat cash for the first two years (net of Operation Uplift investment) and a reduction of 5% for the third year.

There is also uncertainty in relation to the expected efficiency savings, as the HO will stipulate that Police Officer numbers have to be maintained at post Operation Uplift levels and this would significantly reduce the scope from which efficiency savings could be made.

It was also unclear if the findings of the review of the funding formula would be implemented as part of the CSR. Although the review finding had previously been quality assured, this was conducted five years ago and it may not include current factors such as the impact of Covid19.

The JAC Accounts Lead queried if there would be a one-year to two-year pay freeze, as the report appeared to reflect a two-year freeze. The HOF confirmed it was a one-year freeze, as pay awards commenced from September each year so the twelve months would spread across two financial years.

We noted the MTFP was building in 6.82% precept growth, and also refers to the potential for there to be a lower Council Tax collection rate. With early indications that the Police Government grant would also be reduced, the UK Government may expect therefore that Commissioners raise Council Tax Precept levels. We asked how feasible this approach would be and the CFO advised us it was a very difficult decision for the Commissioner to make. The Commissioner and CFO would have to consider the impact of the increase in National Insurance through taxation, the impact of Covid19, the potential increase in unemployment; whilst having to retain policing numbers, as well as having to maintain an efficient and effective Policing service by providing the Chief Constable the funds to deliver the service. Clarification of the CSR and findings of the public consultation on the precept would aid this decision.

The CFO advised us there was a possibility that over half of the Forces in the UK would receive the majority of their funding from local tax payers and the JAC members were concerned that this may be the trajectory for Gwent Police should the police funding grant be reduced.

The CFO informed us that the McCloud pension revaluation was also a concern for the Force, as there could potentially be additional pension costs amounting to £8m and Government Grant may not be sufficient to

cover the costs. Early indications were that there was no surety for the costs being funded through the CSR, therefore the costs may be borne locally by the Force.

Action

The Commissioner explained that setting the precept was always a difficult balance. His overwhelming motivation was to ensure Gwent Police had sufficient funds to discharge an acceptable service for the public of Gwent, which means difficult decisions have to be made. However, it was recognised that this negotiation would be like no other, with many factors impacting on funding for many public sector organisations, particularly following Covid19. The Commissioner assured us he would consider the position of the Force and the general public's ability to pay.

We asked what the consequences would be if the OPCC were not in a position to meet the dates within the budget setting timetable. The CFO confirmed that it was a legal requirement for the Commissioner to notify the Police and Crime Panel of his precept by the 1st February and if the Government hadn't confirmed UK Government Grant for Policing by the deadline, the budget would be based on assumptions until the figures were released. Therefore, the OPCC would always be in a position to meet the statutory deadline. Should the CFO not be available to adhere to his statutory duty in advising the Commissioner on the sufficiency of the budget and the level of reserves, his counterpart from SWP would step in and vice versa; so there were contingency plans in place in terms of resilience.

We asked what other innovative measures were being considered to generate funding and the CFO explained that there were statutory rules in relation to income generation and the Income Strategy Report would be presented to JAC in March 2022 to provide details of the available options.

GO

The Force's newly appointed External Funding and Partnership Manager was focussing on the four main priorities within the Income Generation Strategy, in order to generate income. These priorities are maximising opportunities for external grants, such as Safer Streets grants of which the Force have been successful on bids 2 and 3 equating to £1.5m; maximising general fees and charges for commercial events etc.; maximising sponsorship opportunities, such as for vehicles; and reviewing the Section 106 of the Planning Act, Community and Infrastructure Levy opportunities to ensure the Force were receiving their rightful entitlement for private sector investment in police buildings and infrastructure.

We noted an All-Wales Productivity and Efficiency Group had recently been established, to focus on the delivery of non-cashable savings. The ACOR informed us that the Force had good monitoring arrangements in place to capture the business benefits relating to any new innovation and it was positive that the Force were creating new efficiencies. However, it was a challenge for the Force whilst trying to maintain effective delivery.

We noted a forecast position was not presented to the year end in the Finance Report 2021/22 for Quarter 1 as it was too early and therefore impacted by the phasing of the budgets throughout the year; the phasing of expenditure; reversals from the accruals within the accounts; and the timing of income received. There would be a detailed forecast for the full year in the Q2 report, which would help inform the budget process.

There was an approximate saving of around £400k a month against the recruitment element of the annual budget relating to appointing of officers and staff for Operation Uplift. However, the surplus would diminish as the remaining officers and staff intakes were recruited by January 2022. The Force were deliberating the best use of the underspend and considering added it to the reserve funding for Operation Uplift for non-recurrent items such as kit or vehicles; or moving it to the general reserve funding, as the overall reserves were being fully utilised for the comprehensive capital programme.

At the end of Quarter 1, police officer pay and salary allowances were under budget due to the year to date effect of current vacancies and the timing of the next cohort of new officers from Operation Uplift. These posts are budgeted in full for the financial year, hence the phasing of recruitment results in underspends for the period from 1st April onwards, while these posts are unfilled. It was suggested that the likely number of posts should be reflected in the initial budget to ensure there was no surplus, particularly in view of the mounting pressures which could result in a precept tax increase. The CFO informed us that the vacancies were budgeted for in this way as the vacancies related to Operation Uplift officers, which was funded by specific UK Government grant and not by precept.

We noted there had been significant improvement in the collection of outstanding debts and the No purchase order, No payment process had helped to reduce payment of Creditors to well below the standard 30 days.

The Commissioner left the meeting at 13.00pm

OUTSTANDING AUDIT INSPECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

12. We received and noted the Outstanding Audit Recommendations.

We noted many of the TCBC outstanding audit recommendations had been completed and others were progressing.

We noted the SRS update on the progress of the audit plan 2021/22. There were 21 open actions in relation to the Force. There was 1 item flagged for management attention and this was to be discussed by the Section 151 Officers at the FGB in the following week.

The JAC ICT Lead asked why the tender process for other Local Authorities' to purchase a (Security Information and Event Management -

(SIEM) solution was still in the standstill period and the ACOR confirmed that it had gone through the full tender process and a full evaluation had been conducted. The 10 day standstill period allowed for any challenges by other providers.

We noted Iss.16b BCM audit action, item 5.1, arrangements for a live exercise and requested clarity on the 31st December 2022 deadline. The ACOR confirmed that he intended to raise the issue at the FGB, as the date was too far ahead and the timing itself may not be feasible.

The ACOR advised us that 7 of the 15 TIAA outstanding audit recommendations had been completed and requested to extend 5 of them.

We asked if the Force and the OPCC were concerned about any residual risks that may be compromised by the delays and how realistic the extension dates were. The ACOR assured us that work was ongoing to ensure the dates could be achieved and the main area for focus was Local Policing – Property and Cash. However, we were assured activity was ongoing in this area to ensure the date could be met.

We noted there was reference to changes in the overall Force governance structure. The ACOR confirmed there would not be any fundamental changes to existing governance arrangements as the Force were adding to it. For example, the newly formed Ethics Committee would feed into the governance structure.

We noted the Collaborative Change Control reports and raised concerns regarding the domain controller issues and how they had occurred in the first instance. We also noted the statement that it was initially intended to be a collaborative arrangement but in practise was more of a service agreement, which was subsequently replaced with a national programme in order to align Forces. The ACOR explained that the ICT Configuration report articulated the old risks from a couple of years ago and a review of Collaborative Change Control was undertaken by TIAA; with 2 of the 4 audit recommendations completed, a decision had to be made with regards to the 2 remaining recommendations. The firewalls could have been taken down between Gwent Police and SWP but it would have taken a significant amount of time and expenditure to reconfigure the whole network and services in order to eliminate the risk. By using the current option of a cloud-based solution, the reliance of firewalls between Forces has been removed. The cloud-based system also provided security for Forces and enabled access to the NEP. Furthermore, the Niche policing system was also moving to a secure cloud-based solution in the near future.

The JAC ICT Lead asked how the Force could be assured that the system was secure prior to moving to a cloud-based system. The ACOR advised us that details had been mapped out for the services that Gwent were

reliant on SWP for in order to operate, as demonstrated in the Domain Mapping report, Annex 5A.

Action

The extensions for the outstanding recommendations were agreed.

JAC SELF- ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN

13. We received and noted the Joint Audit Committee Self-Assessment Action Plan.

Following a discussion, we agreed to close actions 4a, 19, 23.

HoAC

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

14. We received and noted the Information Governance Report 2020/21.

The ACOR advised that a review of the Data Management function was conducted in light of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements. This led to the establishment of the Information Services and Information Governance structures, upon which the report was based.

The structure of the Information Governance Team preserves the independence of the Data Protection Officer (DPO), as required by legislation. In addition, it also brings together complementary processes to ensure compliance when dealing with information across the Force.

We were informed there were key performance areas for both Information Governance and Information Board Services, which were monitored through the Information Assurance Board.

The ACOR informed us that the Force had focussed on raising awareness of GDPR and the reporting of incidents and processes had much improved in this area. The Force were proactive at mitigating the risk, as incidents were monitored closely and the relevant referrals were made to the Information Commissioner's Office if required and feedback provided to ensure lessons were learnt.

Records management was to be progressed further this year, by ensuring all documents were uploaded electronically onto Sharepoint. This would make sure that documents could be a destroyed automatically in accordance with the Retention Schedule.

The benefits of having a joint DPO meant that Gwent and SWP were able to share polices in order to meet Force compliance with data protection obligations and to share best practice for each Force.

We noted there had been 100% compliance with Subject Access Requests throughout the year, apart from one month at 95%. We requested clarity on the remaining 5%, as to whether timelines were

missed or if there was no response provided. The ACOR confirmed that all SARs received a response and the 5% in this instance related to the timelines being missed.

Action

Clarity was sought in relation to who the accountable Chief Officer was for this portfolio. The ACOR confirmed that he was the Chief Officer and he would ensure it was included in future reports.

We thanked the ACOR for the positive report.

FORWARD WORK PLANNER

15. We received and noted the Forward Work Planner.

The Forward Work Planner was shared with JAC members for review, to ensure that they were adhering to their remit of their Terms of Reference throughout the year.

It was suggested that the timing of the JAC meeting in December be monitored in terms of ensuring there was enough time to discuss each item on the agenda at the same pace. If not, the forward planner would need to be reviewed in order to move some of the reports to a bi-annual schedule, provided there are no concerns relating to the subject matter. The Chair agreed to review the Forward Work Planner to ascertain if any of the reports could be moved to a bi-annual schedule to allow more time to focus on other areas.

CHAIR

It was suggested that the Reserves Strategy Report should be moved from September to December on the Forward Work Planner going forward and the CFO agreed.

**GO/
HoAC**

It was suggested that a review was conducted to ensure the reports contained within the Forward Work Planner were within the JAC's ToR and the CFO agreed that an additional column would be added to the planner in order to cross reference the reports to the ToR and to identify those that should take priority

HoAC

It was recommended in the Forward Work Planner that the Information Governance Annual Report was circulated outside of the meeting. However, as it was well received at this meeting, it was suggested that the JAC ToR could be reviewed to ascertain if it could be included.

HoAC

It was suggested the JAC received a report on the benefits realisation of the new Headquarters and agreed that it should be presented at the July 2022 JAC meeting.

**GO/
HoAC**

We discussed if Disaster Recovery should be removed off the agenda once it had been completed. The ACOR assured us that it would be monitored through the audit process, so it could be removed when it had been finalised.

ANY RELEVANT REPORTS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS THAT SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE JOINT AUDIT COMMITTEE

16. There were no other reports to bring to the attention of the JAC,

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

17. There was no other business raised during the meeting.

TO IDENTIFY ANY RISKS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING

18. There were no new risks identified during the meeting apart from those noted in previous items.

The meeting concluded at 14:02