



A safe county for everyone



For the Chief Constable of Dorset
Police

17 December 2025

Introduction



Amanda Pearson
Chief Constable for Dorset

Welcome to the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2024/25. The AGS outlines what the key governance structures and processes were during the financial year and captures the main findings arising from the annual review of those arrangements.

Welcome from the Chief Constable

Our people deliver high quality services to our communities. We rely on our governance arrangements as the framework to make sure that service delivery is carried out properly. We each have a responsibility for ensuring that our governance arrangements remain fit for purpose and undertake a review on an annual basis.

Where our review has identified positive practice or areas for improvement, we will capture those in the relevant section of this AGS.

Overall, the review undertaken to inform this AGS indicated that the key structures and processes that were in place during 2024/25 continued to provide a high level of confidence in the governance arrangements and that:

- Decisions are ethical, open, honest, and evidence based.
- Public money is safeguarded.
- Risk is effectively managed.
- Transparency comes as a matter of course.
- Processes are continually improved.

Corporate Governance

What is Corporate Governance?

Corporate governance refers to the process by which organisations are directed, controlled, led, and held to account. In other words, corporate governance is how we make sure we do things properly.

Each year we, the Commissioner and Chief Constable, are required to produce an AGS. The AGS is the formal mechanism we use to report on the effectiveness of our internal control and decision-making systems. Our AGS complies with the reporting requirements contained in the CIPFA – Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and accompanies our accounts for the financial year. This is a document that describes how well our governance system has functioned during the year ended 31 March 2025 and sets out areas for development for the year ahead.

The principles and guidance have again informed the review of governance arrangements for 2024/25. More specifically, the structure of this AGS has been prepared with reference to themes from key elements of the structures and processes referred to in the CIPFA AGS guidance.

In addition, the CIPFA Financial Management Code (FM Code) provides the public sector with guidance for good and sustainable financial management. Dorset have undertaken a review of compliance to the principles and standards within the FM Code that provided assurance on financial sustainability.

Good corporate governance helps to put people first in everything we do. This gives us confidence that we are doing the right thing in the right way for those who we deliver services to, for and with.

In 2016 CIPFA published an updated version of their “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework” which was followed by specific guidance notes for Policing Bodies. The 2016 Framework sets out seven principles of good governance which are taken from the International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) ('the International Framework') and interprets them for local government.

The seven principles are:

- A** – behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law.
- B** – ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- C** – defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
- D** – determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- E** – developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
- F** – managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
- G** – implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Codes of conduct and standards of professional behaviour

Ethics and standards are core to the corporate governance arrangements.

The organisation aspires to the highest ethical standards in all our activities. The policing Code of Ethics sets out the principles and standards of behaviour that promote, reinforce, and support the highest standards from everyone who works within the police service.

A new national Code of Ethics (2024) has been published by the College of Policing outlining the professional behaviours that our communities rightly expect to see of us whether we are a police officer, member of police staff or volunteer.

The Code outlines the expected behaviours from a police service that is fair, ethical, and professional providing a framework to guide the actions taken and decisions every day, no matter what the role. The Code is hosted on the College of Policing website and has been developed by serving police officers, police staff, academics, and representatives from partner organisations. Based on evidence and first-hand experience, it has been developed to ensure everyone feels fully supported within their roles.

The Code of Ethics has been simplified into three principles. These are:

- Public service
- Courage
- Respect and empathy

The Ethics Committee is well established and is a key component of the Ethics Structure.

Complaints and Recognition

Complaints and recognition about the police are handled by the Commissioner's independent team, to ensure fairness, for the public and the police.

The aims and key principles of the process are:

- To learn and develop by improving from mistakes, poor judgement, and low-level misconduct via early and supportive intervention.
- To provide a fair, open, and proportionate process to deal with such matters.
- To focus upon self-reflection, learning from mistakes and development of actions to put issues right and prevent reoccurrence.
- To build an inclusive, reflective, and participative process for the officer involved, and the identification of individual and organisational learning.
- To ensure that disciplinary proceedings are focused and applied only to serious breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour, where it is considered that a formal disciplinary sanction is justified.

Further information

[Code of Practice for Ethical Policing \(2023\)](#)

[Ethical Policing Principles \(2024\)](#)

[Police Misconduct Process](#)

Ensuring Compliance

Code of Corporate Governance

The Code of Corporate Governance is a key governance instrument which acts as a reference point for the expectations and rules about, for example, who in the organisation can make decisions and on what issues.

Finance Regulations

Aligned to the Code of Corporate Governance are the Finance Regulations. These translate into practical guidelines and the framework for decision making on financial matters.

Sources of Assurance

Various sources of assurance are relied on to test and ensure compliance with laws and regulations, the governance arrangements and that expenditure is in line with the Finance Regulations.

Internal Audit

Internal Audit Services were provided by the South- West Audit Partnership (SWAP). The internal audit plan for the year and regular progress reports detailing the outcome of the assignments in the plan were prepared and reported to the Independent Audit Committee.

The plan is risk based and targeted at areas where Internal Audit is the appropriate assurance provider. It is designed with a large degree of flexibility so that changes can be made to test emerging areas of concern.

Based on the internal audit assignments completed throughout the year an audit opinion is formed by SWAP for both the Commissioner and Chief Constable. Both the Commissioner and Chief Constable received positive opinions in the Annual Report for the reporting period.

The positive opinion of the internal auditors for the year ended March 2025 was used to inform the judgement on the level of assurance provided by the governance arrangements.

Head of Internal Audit (SWAP) opinion in support of the Annual Governance Statement (June 2025)

“On the balance of our 2024/25 audit work for Dorset Police and OPCC, enhanced by the work of external agencies, I am able to offer a **Reasonable Assurance** opinion in respect of the areas reviewed during the year.”

Further information

[The Code of Corporate Governance and Financial Regulations](#)

[Annual Internal Audit Report](#)

Ensuring Compliance

Good governance is about how organisations ensure that they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, and accountable manner.

The Commissioner and the Chief Constable have in place structures, systems, and internal controls by which the police service is directed and controlled.

There are also processes and procedures in place that enable the Commissioner to hold the Chief Constable to account for policing in the county. The Commissioner engages with the local people and communities to ensure robust public accountability.

Grant Thornton the external auditor delivers an audit opinion based on their verification of the financial accounts.

2023/24 Accounts

External Audit (Grant Thornton) audited the financial statements of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset and its subsidiary the Chief Constable (the 'group') for the year end 31 March 2024.

A "qualified" opinion was issued due to the possible effects of the external audit on the Dorset County Pensions Fund which was not concluded for 2022/23 and Pension Fund assurances under AGN 07 were not available. The external audit on the Dorset County Pension Fund was concluded however for 2023/24. Assurance was provided that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the group and of the Police and Crime Commissioner accounts. They have been properly prepared in accordance with financial regulations and codes of practice, and that External Audit were satisfied that the PCC and Chief Constable have made proper Value for Money arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of their resources.

Summary of Value for Money assessment 2023/24

Auditors are required to report their commentary on the PCC's and CC's arrangements under specified criteria. The auditors did not identify any risks or significant weakness in the governance arrangements, or the arrangements for improving economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. No significant weakness in arrangements for financial sustainability were identified but the challenge to identify savings is increasing.

External Audit

External Auditors work independently of the organisation. They examine records, operating systems and financial accounts and provide assurance around compliance. Our external audit service is provided by Grant Thornton. The appointment is made independently by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) who manage the arrangements for appointing auditors as set out in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Independent Audit Committee

The Commissioner and Chief Constable operate an Independent Audit Committee (IAC).

During 2024/25 the Committee Chair reviewed issues through regular meetings with the Executive and Chief Officers. Committee members worked together, to develop and use their knowledge and expertise, and that of others to the best effect. They have a non-political, evidence-based approach that has been proven to achieve good results. To support their roles, all Committee Members regularly reviewed and considered their training requirements.

All the IAC sessions in the reporting period were quorate and there was active engagement from members and officers.

Further information

[Independent Audit Committee](#)

[Annual Report – Independent Audit Committee](#)

[Auditors Annual Report 2023/24](#)

Ensuring Compliance

HMICFRS

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses police forces and policing activity in the public interest, ranging from neighbourhood teams through to serious crime and the fight against terrorism.

In preparing their reports, they ask the questions which the public would ask and publish the answers in an accessible form.

HMICFRS provide the information to allow the public to compare the performance of forces against others and their evidence is used to drive improvements in the service to the public.

As an additional source of assurance HMICFRS outcomes were considered in the review of governance arrangements.

The inspectorate's 2023/25 Police Effectiveness Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) report on the Force was published in April 2025. It graded the Force's performance across nine areas of policing. The report found the Force was 'requires improvement' in three areas, 'was found adequate' in four areas and was 'good' in two areas.

HMICFRS are informed to a great extent by the latest Force Management Statement (FMS). This is a self-assessment that the Chief Constable must prepare and submit to HMICFRS each year.

HMICFRS use the FMS and information from their other inspection activity to inform their assessment.

Assessment of the outcomes of HMICFRS inspection activity is overseen and monitored by the Deputy Chief Constables Board.

Further information

[HMICFRS](#)

Force Sustainability

Sustainability is a shortened term for sustainable development, which is development that meets the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development is achieved by balancing economic growth with social inclusion and environmental protection. Dorset Police recognises that we need to embed sustainability into everything that we do to ensure we future proof the Force and our local communities.

Because of the interconnected nature of our economy, our environment, and our society we have a direct impact on some of the UN Sustainability Goals and a significant indirect impact on the others. Consequently, we have incorporated all the UN Sustainability Goals into the key areas of action in our Sustainability Strategy.

Risk Management

Risk management is a key facet of Dorset Police's governance framework. The framework comprises the systems, processes and values through which activities are monitored and managed. It is essential that the threats to achieving objectives are consistently identified and assessed. This is achieved through the adoption and implementation of an effective risk management process that supports the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan and Force Business Plans.

A consistent process for the management and reporting of risk has been adopted. Force risks are reported to the Chief Officers and OPCC at the Joint Executive Board. Shared service business risks are reported to the Dorset and D&C Executive and OPCC at the Working Together Board.

The Independent Audit Committee monitors risk reports for assurance on the effectiveness of risk management arrangements on behalf of Dorset Police.

Transparency & Engagement

The view of the organisation is that transparency is one of the pillars of good corporate governance. The stated aspiration is that statutory requirements are not only complied with but exceeded.

Active engagement with the communities that we serve helps to create a positive working relationship with them and a more detailed understanding of their needs and issues.

A range of tools are used to help up be aware of and understand the experiences of our communities.

The communities of Dorset were regularly invited to have their say during 2024/25.

Participation was encouraged in surveys relating to several topics, with news and newsletters regularly published on the OPCC website.

Professional Standards & Behaviour

The principle of policing by consent relies on the trust and confidence that the public has in the police service. Professional Standards Department (PSD) plays a crucial role in maintaining that trust and confidence in policing, by ensuring that high standards are effectively managed.

Effective policing is built on public trust and confidence. This depends on a policing profession that is ethical and professional in the way that it respects, listens, responds, improves, and serves the public.

Chief officers lead the Force by supporting the positive reinforcement, and development of ethical and professional behaviour, to improve policing practice. Unprofessional behaviour is challenged, staff welfare is understood and managed, openness and candour are supported, professional development is encouraged, and misconduct is investigated.

PSD is primarily focused on four key areas of business:

- Vetting – ensuring that new joiners, re-joiners, and current employed staff have the correct level of vetting for their role.
- Complaints – dealing with complaints in a timely and effective manner that enhances the reputation of Dorset Police.
- Misconduct – investigating incidents where there is a possibility that standards of professional behaviour have been breached.
- Counter-Corruption – investigating officers and staff where there is a concern that corrupt practices and behaviours may be occurring.



How the Force was managed in 2024/25

Police and Crime Plan

The plan sets out the vision and priorities for policing and community safety, as well as the objectives and ambitions that the Chief Constable is held to account against.

Community engagement was sought during the reporting period to inform a refresh of the Police and Crime Plan priorities.

Code of Corporate Governance

Crucially this contains the scheme of delegation and consent which sets out the parameters for who can make decisions across the business. This was last refreshed and updated in April 2023 and due to be refreshed again in 2025.

Chief Financial Officer

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for the Force supports the Chief Constable, giving advice, overseeing spending plans, and sitting as a member of the Chief Officer Executive team. This role is the person responsible in law for the proper administration of the Force's financial affairs. The CFO is a qualified accountant and has responsibility for the delivery of ICT services, Transport, Administration and Financial Services within Dorset. These departments are all delivered in partnership with Devon and Cornwall (D&C) Police, and are joint teams working across, and providing services to, all three counties.

The Dorset CFO works closely with the D&C CFO who is a member of the five Force Regional Finance Directors group and represents all five Directors at the Regional Strategic Chiefs and Commissioners meeting. They are also the lead officer for the Southwest Police Procurement Department, which provides its services to Devon & Cornwall Police, Dorset Police, Gloucestershire Constabulary, Wiltshire Police and Avon and Somerset Police.

Financial Management & the Resource Control Board

The forum for oversight of corporate health during 2024/25 was the Resource Control Board. During the year the Board operated monthly to monitor the management of resources including land, property, finance, projects, and people. The Board received regular reports on workforce supply, litigation, estates, revenue and capital budget monitoring and forecasting.

The Resource Control Board has supported the achievement of the strategic objectives as recorded in the Commissioners Annual Report.

Joint Leadership Board

The purpose of the Joint Leadership Board (JLB) is to act as a formal governance meeting to consult on significant strategic issues and risks that jointly affect the shape of policing and crime within the Force area and to discuss issues which determine the strategic direction of the Force and OPCC. JLB will guide the OPCC and the Force in the formulation of its corporate strategies, corporate plans, objectives, and priorities considering the social, environmental, and economic needs of our communities, partners, and the individual corporation's sole.

Joint Executive Board

As the executive decision-making forum for the partnership between Dorset and Devon and Cornwall Police, the Joint Executive Board (JEB). The board provides organisational governance and leadership, sets strategic direction, provides scrutiny and management of risk and ensures co-ordination of priorities across both Force areas.

It is noted and accepted that whilst JEB may make decisions which 'bind' both Forces, it is equally possible for JEB to make decisions in relation to one Force only or alternatively to deal with matters that impact on only one Force rather than both.

Scrutiny Arrangements

Holding the Chief Constable to Account

This is the statutory role of a Police and Crime Commissioner and can be done in several ways. Locally the Commissioner uses a mix of public meetings, reports, and research; organisations such as HMICFRS; and formal complaints to assess the Chief Constable against expectations.

In Dorset the Commissioners plan is to focus on the following six priorities:

- Cut crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Making policing more visible and connected
- Fighting violent crime and high harm
- Fight rural crime.
- Put victims and communities first.
- Make every penny count.

The Commissioner actively seeks the input of the public to effectively carry out the scrutiny function. Whether formal or informal, scrutiny is informed by public views, needs and feedback.

Scrutiny Panels

Independent Scrutiny Panels are administered by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to enable the Commissioner to hold Dorset Police to account in the below areas.

- The Commissioner chairs the Use of Police Powers and Standards Scrutiny Panel.
- The Out of Court Disposals Panel has an independent chair.

Both Panels comprise members of the public together with representatives from the Force and OPCC.

- Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) provide an independent check on the welfare of people who are detained in custody.

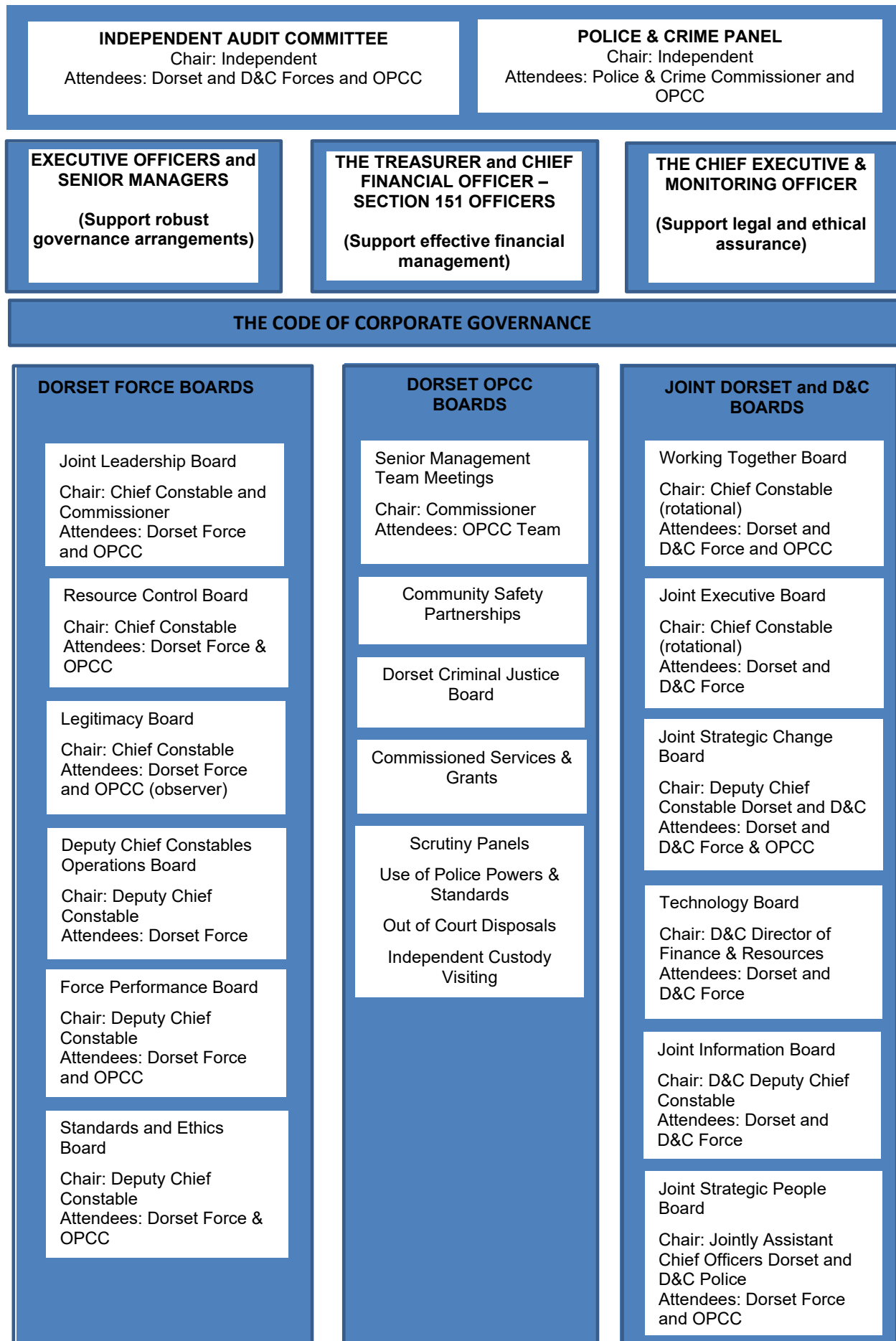
Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers drawn from all walks of life whose main role is to provide an independent check on the welfare of people who are detained in police custody. They do this by making random, unannounced visits in pairs to police custody suites throughout the County and reporting their findings.

Further information

[Scrutiny Panels](#)

[Commissioners Annual Report](#)

High Level Governance Model



Working with others – Collaboration Governance

The Commissioner has a statutory duty to collaborate and so it is important that good governance arrangements are incorporated for oversight of collaboration activity.

The agreements that underpin collaboration activity are published as a matter of routine.

Collaboration Agreements

Force Collaboration agreements are made under Section 23 (e) of the Police Act 1996.

Force collaborations may consist of a provision for:

- The joint discharge of functions by members of police forces.
- Members of a police force to discharge functions in other force's area.
- Members of a police force to be provided to another force.

Chief Officers may make a collaboration agreement only if the chief officer thinks that the agreement is in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of one or more police forces.

Community Safety Partnerships

The two Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in Dorset ([BCP Council](#) and [Dorset Council](#) areas), each bring together representatives from key statutory organisations (local authorities, police, fire authority, health and probation services), alongside other key non-statutory agencies, in order to address crime and community safety issues that impact on the local communities within their geographical area.

Other established partnerships

We are members of a number of other important established partnerships in Dorset, such as:

The Dorset Criminal Justice Board, which brings together leaders from key agencies such as the Police, in order to oversee delivery of the Criminal Justice System in Dorset.

- His Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS)
- His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS),
- the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS),
- Youth Offending Service (YOS),
- the National Probation Service (NPS),
- the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) and Health

The Partnership Board for the Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service, which is a partnership responsible for working with young people, to help prevent them committing crime or where they have already done so, to try to prevent them from re-offending. They also help young people and their families at police stations and at court and they supervise young people serving community sentences.

The Pan-Dorset Sexual Violence Strategy Group and the Pan-Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy Group, dedicated to improving service delivery in these crucial themed areas of business.

Dorset Watch Schemes - these schemes reflect the diversity of the urban and rural make up of Dorset, and all are tailored to meet the needs and interests of particular groups within our communities (e.g Community Speed Watch, Neighbourhood Watch, Hotel Watch).

In addition, we have very strong relationships with other partnerships that come together to tackle important specific topics such as Drugs and Alcohol, Mental Health, Nighttime Economy issues, Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children, plus partnerships aimed at more geographically focused local problems. We help to fund and/or facilitate some of this partnership work, to better address issues that no single agency can necessarily tackle alone.

Working with others – Collaboration Governance

Working Together

Devon and Cornwall Police and Dorset Police work together making key strategic decisions and providing effective governance for existing alliances across both forces.

The forces work in partnership to agree the visions and priorities for the delivery of services, identifying savings and approving funding to support shared service delivery.

Shared business areas are kept under regular review with improvements and benefits identified, to ensure service delivery meet today's needs.

Regional Collaborations

The Southwest Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables are committed to working together seeking opportunities to develop relationships and collaborations. This is achieved through a mix of national and regional alignment and collaboration. The Southwest police region covers five forces, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Avon & Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, and Dorset.

The current collaborative arrangements between forces have evolved over time and exist at a variety of different levels. There are strategic alliances between Devon and Cornwall and Dorset, and Wiltshire and Avon and Somerset, as well as three, four and five force collaborations. Arrangements include the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) and the South-West Police Procurement Department (SWPPD).

Collaborations are designed to provide effective and efficient services which builds policing, capability, capacity, and resilience while providing value for money through clear accountability, good governance, and transparency. This supports the achievement of long-term operational effectiveness and economy through greater interoperability, integration, or joint working of policing and public services.

Governance Arrangements

The Review of Governance Arrangements in place during 2024/25

The review of effectiveness of the joint governance arrangements in place during 2024/25 indicated that the framework provided a high level of assurance. Based on reflection of the key structures and processes which comprise those arrangements it can be judged that appropriate mechanisms existed to:

- promote and monitor codes of conduct and professional behaviour.
- ensure compliance with internal and external requirements.
- promote transparency and acting in the public interest.
- develop channels of communication with all sections of the community.
- manage the business to deliver the organisational vision of being synonymous with exemplary service.
- apply good governance arrangements to collaboration activity and partnerships.
- appropriately scrutinise performance.

The areas for development detailed overleaf have been identified from the review process. The implementation of these will be monitored and reported in our AGS for 2024/2025.

Key challenges in local audit accounting

The certification of the 2023-24 accounts was completed prior to the February 2025 backstop date.

The auditors issued a qualified opinion due to the limitation of the scope opinion issued on the 2022/23 financial statements. This was due to lack of assurance over the pension liability figures.

The timely release of audited accounts is vital to public sector governance arrangements, who need the numbers for future budgeting and decision making.

Delays in publishing local government audited accounts have increased significantly with many public sector audit opinions outstanding. This means that many stakeholders can't rely on audited accounts to inform decision making – a significant risk for governance and control.

Local authority accounts are becoming increasingly complex as accounting standards evolve, and delays are exacerbated by capacity constraints in both local audit and local government.

There are some reasons for cautious optimism that the system will begin to recover and there will be a gradual return to better compliance with publication targets. Dorset Police continue to work closely with the external auditors to resolve these issues and recognise the current challenges.



Areas for Development for 2025/26

The key areas for development during 2025/26 are summarised below.

Area for Development	Owner	Target date
Partnership Governance. Governance arrangements for the reporting of national, regional, and local multi-agency operational partnerships.	Chief Constable	September 2025
Dorset Police Race Action Plan Development and delivery of the Dorset Police Race Action Plan	Chief Constable and OPCC	December 2025
Savings & Efficiency Planning Delivery of cost savings to ensure the Force can deliver a balanced budget each year.	Chief Constable and OPCC	April 2026
Governance Oversight Ensuring that evolving shared services structures, retain strong governance oversight during periods of change.	Chief Constable	December 2025

Summary

This statement is intended to provide reasonable assurance on governance arrangements. It is stressed that no system of control can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

No significant governance issues have been identified during this year's review. For completeness, the minor issues identified are recorded and will be addressed to ensure continuous improvement.

We hope that this document provides you with some helpful insight into how we decided to lead Dorset Police, the systems we have put in place to ensure our decisions are open and accountable, and that your money is safeguarded.

Signatures

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Chief Constable for Dorset Police

Neal Butterworth
Chief Financial Officer