



To: Joint Audit Committee

From: Jack Hudson, CEO, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

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BCH Governance arrangements

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide the Police and Crime Commissioner (the “Commissioner”) and the Chief Constable with an overview of the current governance arrangements in place for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire’s collaborated functions.
- 1.2 This report is intended to enable the Joint Audit Committee (JAC) to provide independent advice and recommendations to the Commissioner and the Chief Constable on the adequacy and effectiveness of these governance arrangements.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Police Act 1996 set out the provisions under which collaboration agreements may be made by police forces and policing bodies. These legal provisions were amended and expanded by the Policing and Crime Act 2009 and the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
- 2.2 Sections 22A, 23 and 23A provide for joint working between police forces and/or policing bodies and/or other parties where, in the opinion of the chief officer or policing body, the collaboration delivers greater efficiency or

effectiveness to at least one of the participating forces or policing bodies. The relevant participating forces and policing bodies were Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire's (BCH).

- 2.3 BCH Collaboration is structured around a Host Force model, where each Force takes the responsibility for one or more of the collaborated units with regards to managerial and pastoral responsibilities¹. All three forces exercise collective responsibility for functional scrutiny, performance, processes, operational oversight and assurance.
- 2.4 Decisions that affect planning, service delivery, risk management and performance are made consensually as equals, requiring each member to be committed to the overall strategic direction and action. Each party will be treated equally, irrespective of the size or nature of financial contribution.
- 2.5 The approach to the strategic governance of the collaborative units was defined as follows;
- 2.5.1 The Strategic Alliance Summit (SAS), made up of the three PCCs and the three Chief Constables delegated authority to the Joint Chief Officer Board (JCOB) for the delivery of collaborated services as agreed through the respective s.22s agreements and Business Plans².
- 2.5.2 The three Chief Constables delegated responsibility to the Deputy Chief Constables (DCC) to ensure the collaborated functions are managed in line with expected and agreed service levels.
- 2.5.3 The PCCs hold their Chief Constable to account for the performance of their force and all collaborated services delivered to it.

The previous arrangements for reporting performance and risks for the collaborated functions passed from the functional heads into the DCC's Board, then onto the JCOB and finally into SAS. The format of reports

• ¹ BCH Collaborated Services are hosted as follows Joint Protected Services (RPU / Dogs / APU / OSU / Civil Contingencies / SSU / Major Crime / Business Coordination) – Bedfordshire

• HR, IMD, Payroll, PSD, Stores – Cambridgeshire

• AoJ, CTC, FEL, Custody Command (B&H), ICT – Hertfordshire

²The most recent iterations of the s.22 agreements and business plans / delivery plans for collaborated functions were agreed in May 2025 by SAS.

provided a consistent methodology to enable oversight of the collaborated functions. Further oversight was provided through the attendance of OPCC's at Boards, where PCCs had additional statutory responsibilities³. For example the complaints process.

- 2.6 Whilst a consistent approach to the reporting of performance and risks was helpful, there were cases where issues had not sufficiently surfaced. Risks and issues within individual functions that should have received the necessary focus at JCOB and at SAS, were not necessarily escalated. The performance of the Firearms and Explosive Licensing unit is a recent example of this.

3. Agreed changes for reporting BCH Performance

- 3.1 Chief Officer teams have and are changing. It was identified that there was an opportunity for those Chief Officers to better understand the performance of collaborated functions and determine how those functions fit into individual force and PCC performance management, in relation to Force priorities and Police and Crime Plans.
- 3.2 On 12 November 2025, the Chief Constables agreed, at the JCOB, that collaborated units' performance management will feed directly into individual Force Performance Boards. This was agreed by SAS on 24 November 2025. This is intended to ensure that the management of performance for those units is properly aligned to local force performance priorities and Police and Crime Plans.
- 3.3 The Chief Constables asked the DCCs to maintain oversight of risks in/to performance at the collaborated DCCs Board. This will be achieved through regular reporting on issues of assurance (no issues), awareness (issues, but under management) and alert (issues, deteriorating or requiring enhanced support). A simple written report to accompany Key Performance Indicators will specifically state whether risks have been flagged in their formal risk register.

³ Information Management (SIRO) Board and PSD Scrutiny Board.

3.4 These changes allow Chief Officer Teams (COTs) to better understand the detail of the services delivered by the collaborative units and in turn allow individual PCCs to hold their Chief Constable to account for the performance of those functions at their own local holding to account forums. This approach is visualised at **Appendix 1**.

4. Translating this locally

4.1 The Commissioner's primary holding to account forum, is the Police Accountability Board (PAB)⁴. Through this Board, the Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account for the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Constabulary and collaborated services. The PAB fulfils statutory responsibilities of the Commissioner. The terms of reference for PAB are published on the Commissioner's Website: [Police Accountability Board \(PAB\)](#)

4.2 Following on from the changes agreed by SAS in November 2025, PAB has evolved to include a risk-based approach to better understand the efficiency and effectiveness of the services delivered by the collaborative functions. This enhances the Commissioner's statutory function of holding the Chief Constable to account. This approach is aligned with the agreed changes for reporting of BCH performance as discussed at Section 3.

4.3 Outside of PAB, the OPCC will continue to access multiple sources of information and meetings across the Constabulary and the collaborated space. This will continue to provide the necessary oversight of the services delivered as defined within the agreed delivery plans, the risks and issues as managed through the individual risk registers, performance and value for money. Issues identified will be fed back into PAB for scrutiny.

4.4 This approach is intended to mitigate a joint risk that the tri-force collaboration does not deliver the anticipated benefits or fails to maintain statutory standards.

⁴ This was previously referred to as the Business Coordination Board (BCB).

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 The JAC are asked to consider the governance arrangements outlined within this report and provide independent advice and recommendations to the Commissioner and the Chief Constable on the adequacy and effectiveness of these governance arrangements.

Appendix 1.

